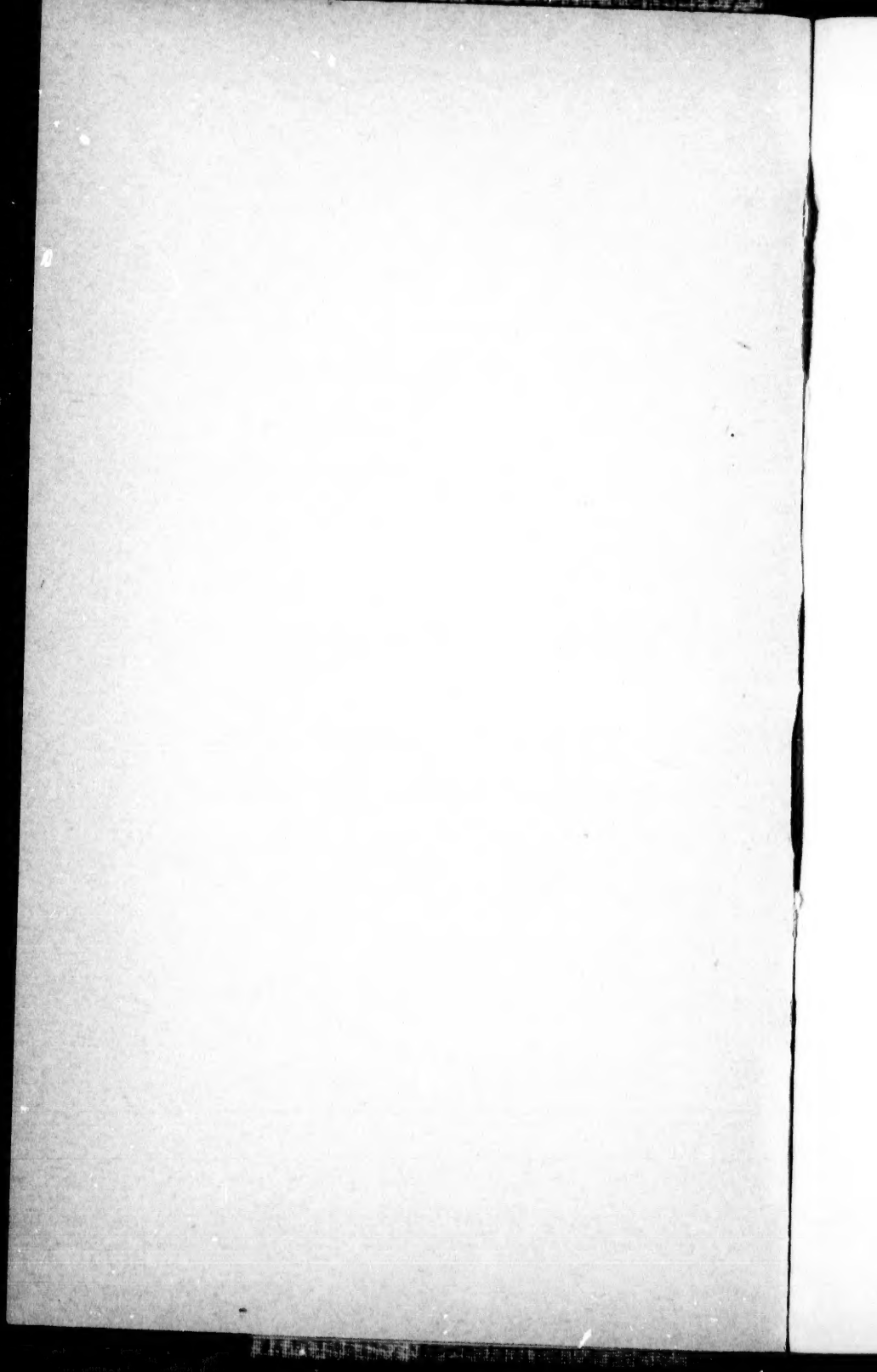




THE GOLDEN CHORD.

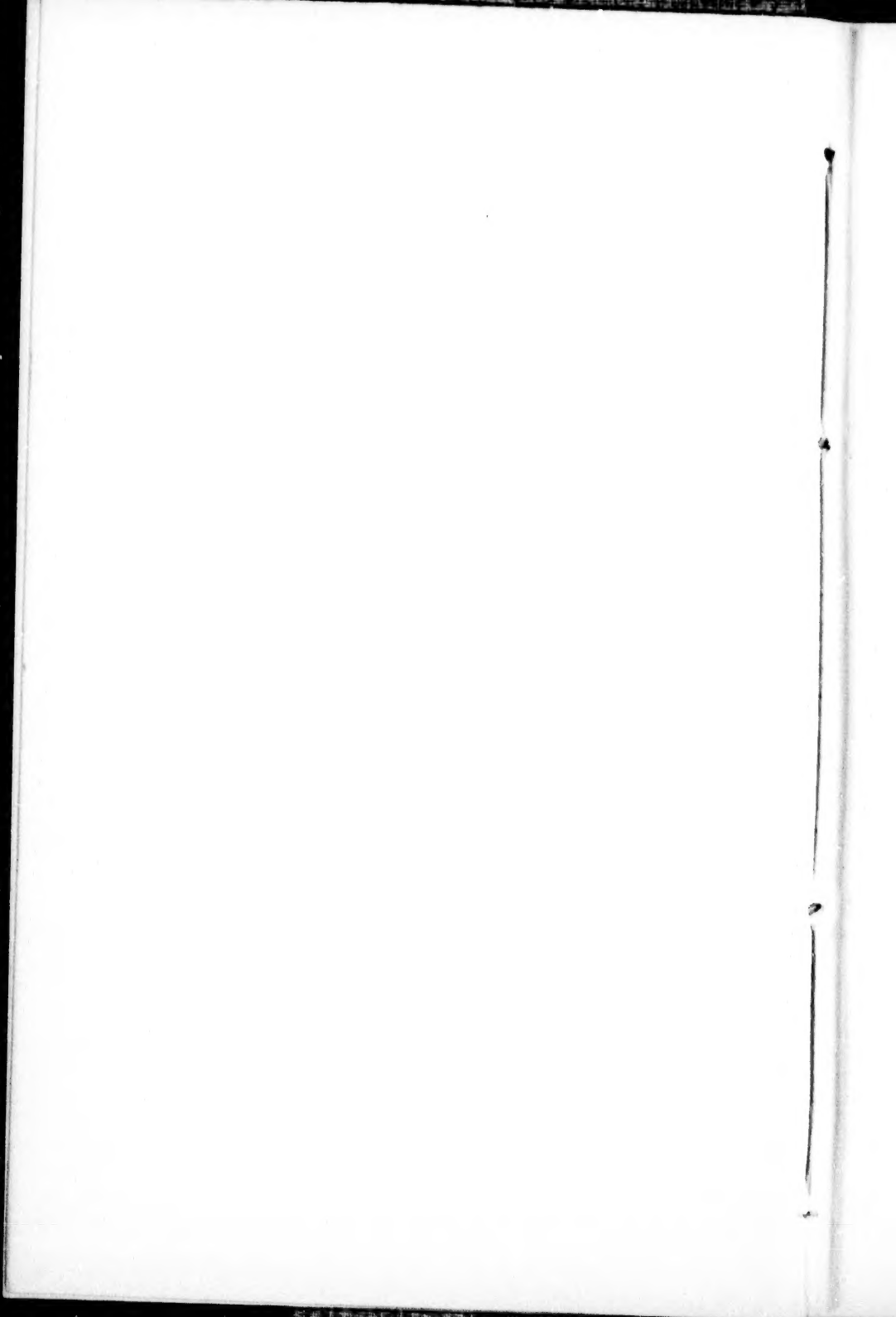
THE
GOLDEN CHORD.

A STORY OF TRIAL AND
CONQUEST.

BY

MARGARET E. TENNANT.

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PREFACE.

The ambition of my early years was to write a book—an ambition prompted not so much perhaps from a desire that good might follow as for my own gratification. As wisdom came with maturer years the ambition still remained, but the motive was replaced by a higher one—that anything I might be enabled to write might bear forth an influence that would be for the moral uplift of humanity. With that end in view I have endeavored to make the golden chord of love ring throughout the pages of this book in the hope that its music might touch some heartstring that has been silent in the past and cause it to vibrate once more, and with a prayer that the result may be in accordance with the desire of my heart, I send forth this work on its mission.

M. E. TENNANT.

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THE GOLDEN CHORD.

CHAPTER I.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

IT was Christmas Eve, and Mr. and Mrs. Morton were giving one of their pleasant entertainments at home to the young people of Tilson, a pretty Canadian town on the St. L——. Mr. and Mrs. Morton had three children—Annie, a sweet, gentle girl of eighteen; Frank, a merry, fun-loving lad of sixteen; Edith, the eldest, had been an invalid for some time. Although not confined to her room, she was seldom able to leave the house. In the large sitting room was a bay window, facing the south, and filled with choice flowers. Near by was drawn her easy chair, and conveniently were placed books, papers and whatever she might need. This she called her world, where she loved to gather the young people. For one so young she had a well stored mind, and faithfully tried to lift up the standard of thought among her friends; and any who did not enjoy this company could easily find an excuse to be absent. Hither one might come to find the genius

and talent of the community. This was a special occasion for gladness, and, guided by Edith's artistic eye, the rooms were beautifully decorated with evergreens and flowers. But on her account the nook by the bay window was the centre of attraction.

"Miss Barton, Mr. Terrell." Mrs. Morton stepped forward under the soft gaslight to introduce her last arrived guest, Mr. Sanford Terrell, to Miss Alene Barton and other members of the company. There were happy faces, kind greetings and joyful notes of music which spoke "peace and good-will to all."

Sanford Terrell was the young but senior partner of the law firm of Terrell & Grant in the thriving town of Chester, and was visiting his aunt, Mrs. Mason, in Tilson, thus receiving an invitation to accompany his cousins, Edna and Fred., to the party. His father died when he was young, leaving just enough money to give him a good education. By working diligently he was now prosperous. His mother dying when he was grown up, left him the valuable legacy of an excellent training. The fact that he studied law had not changed him, for he tried to have right rule. He was tall, with dark hair and grey eyes. He had a broad forehead and a high straight nose and wore a dark moustache. At first glance he might not be what the world would call handsome, but he had a kind face and manly bearing, indicating

a true and honest heart, which makes one look again and wish to become better acquainted.

Alene Barton was the only surviving child of wealthy parents. She was fair, with golden brown hair and large blue eyes, which gave expression to her thoughts and moods ; a firm chin beneath a playful mouth gave the combined impression of sweetness and strength of character. Everyone seemed to love her—for she loved everyone—and, true and womanly, she was giving her young life in trying to make others glad. The company were enjoying themselves as only light-hearted youth can. Sanford almost involuntarily found himself at Alene's side, as the magnetism of one strong mind attracts another. While luncheon was being served, he asked permission to remain there ; and soon they were talking together as pleasantly as if they had been acquaintances for years. They did not talk of fashion or of the follies which fade into nothing, but of science, art, music and most of all of the love which brought harmony into their lives this Christmas Eve. Lately Sanford was becoming accustomed to being coaxed and petted by fashionable mothers and daughters of society on account of his profession, and was forming an idea that intellectually woman was man's inferior. For sometimes when he wished to talk on the deeper subjects some listened for effect, others with a make-believe-they-were-interested air, while some grew tired

or had a headache. Here he found one who was completely herself in talking of the stern realities of life. Even when the conversation took a political turn she could explain the general movement and foundation of legislation. He was becoming intensely interested and puzzled to know whether she cared for either him or his profession; or was she one of the novelties of the present age? while Alene thought, here is another man besides father who is not afraid to talk sense to a woman. From her father she had formed a very high ideal of manhood, but was beginning to get the idea from observation or experience that most men are given to flattery and treat women as their inferiors intellectually, and this vexed her.

"The air of this place gives one an appetite," remarked Sanford, as he finished his coffee.

"Is the atmosphere agreeable to you?" asked Alene.

"Perfectly, Miss Barton, perfectly."

Perhaps had she seen the look in his eyes that Edith Morton did she would have better understood him

"I am glad, for you will go away with a good impression of Tilson."

"That I certainly shall. One leaves a gathering like this to rest with satisfaction, not to toss with an inexpressible aching void in the heart."

"Then you have learned what a blessed thing

it is to culture ourselves to appreciate the best within our reach."

"Yes, I think I have," he answered, thoughtfully. "You have some rare talent here."

"Generally speaking, we have no extra ability, only Miss Morton is a jewel. She is our guiding star."

"She appears to be fading."

"Not fading, Mr. Terrell, but one of the lights which never grow dim. Still we have a fear that some day the light will suddenly be shut out from our view."

"Then you will try to keep the lower lights burning, will you not, Miss Morton?"

"O, yes! We must try to remember that we each have a work to do."

"Miss Barton, will you please favor us with a solo?" some one asked.

She was accustomed to singing alone and responded willingly.

Sanford accompanied her to the piano.

"What shall I sing?" she asked.

"Your choice shall be mine," he answered.

And she selected "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" in solo form.

While she sang Sanford felt as he had seldom felt before the power there is in melody of such a rare sweet voice. When Alene had finished she asked:

"Will we sing together 'Nearer, My God, to Thee?'"

And as his clear tenor voice blended with her rich soprano the listeners were charmed.

The evening passed off pleasantly, each one thanking Edith and other members of the family for their kind entertainment.

As the company was dispersing Sanford bade Ella good night, expressing a hope to meet again. In his heart he said "we will meet again."

Two days after, when Edna called at Alene's home, Sanford accompanied her. Before leaving he found an opportunity of asking permission to call again. He was kindly received by Mr. and Mrs. Barton and his request granted. He prolonged his stay with Mrs. Mason, and his visits to Alene's home were frequent.

"Auntie, dear," he said one evening, "I fear I will wear out my welcome if I stay much longer with you."

"You are always very welcome with us, Sanford," she answered. "And now that you are engaged in such an important suit as winning Alene Barton, you had better not hurry away."

"Thank you, auntie. You are very good to me ; but I cannot afford to be idle, though the winning or losing of this case seal my destiny. And he prepared to call on Alene, his heart full with a message he must soon speak. While they talked much as usual, he thought Alene more charming than ever.

"I am thinking of leaving Tilson tomorrow Miss Barton, and the memories of these pleasant conversations will always go with me."

"I have not only enjoyed our talks together, but have been benefited," she answered.

"Miss Barton, many are conscious of never having met the person who can unlock for them their own nature and lead the way into its depths and hiding places. Others are conscious that certain individuals give them a totally new possession of their being. With most persons we live only on the ground floor of our nature, and for the time being are not conscious of higher floors or inner apartments. With others we ascend a story and look out at another class of objects. With a very few we ascend to higher stories where the windows look inward and upward and gaze to high heavens and deep eternities. I am quite conscious that in you I have found one who can lead the way to the highest stories of my nature. Alene—" He hesitated. "I cannot leave you without telling you of my love for you. May I hope for your love in return?"

She scarcely needed to speak, for her eyes told the story. He gently took her hand in his and both thanked God for a love that filled their hearts and led them to the highest portals of their being. They

said good-night with a confidence only known to those who have truly loved. Sanford called again in the morning, bringing the token. They felt lonely. Sanford would be very busy now, and he objected to travelling on Sunday unless in case of sickness. Still they were not sad, for they thought the parting would not be for long. When they said good-bye Alene softly whispered "Mizpah"—"The Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another."

"Amen," he responded, and sped on his way, his heart full with a new-found joy and a new purpose in life. Now he must bend all his energies to prepare the place he expected to call home, made so by the love of his dearest.

Although Alene was yet young, she had other suitors. One was Dick Nugent. His parents resided in Tilson, but he was now finishing his term as clerk in the office of Terrell & Grant. He had long admired Alene Barton, but probably admired her rich father more. He was good looking, well educated and polished in his manners. Outwardly Alene could find no fault with him which she could have expressed in words, but felt tired in his company. He failed to interest her, and with true womanly instinct she felt she could not love where she could

not lean, and unless love calls forth our best efforts and highest motives it must fail in its high purpose. So she kindly but honorably declined his attentions. It was Alene's nature to be busy and happy, and now she went about her duties with more gladness and a more joyous melody in her voice, her soul filled with the desire to be a more noble and true woman. Sometimes she wondered if this happiness was too good to last, but she saw no cloud in the horizon.

CHAPTER II.

ALENE BARTON'S TRIAL.

HERE was a heavy lawsuit in court at Chester, and Sanford Terrell was holding defence against strong odds, never allowing anything to attract his attention or swerve him from what he thought to be right. The session lasted longer than was expected, the lawyers being too well matched in ability and well armed for defence. One day as Alene was going gaily about, her father came in with the mail. Taking the letters to her room, she opened the one with the familiar writing. What was this? A cool greeting. Reading she scarcely knew what, her eyes mechanically followed the lines—

“I have reconsidered matters and have changed my mind with regard to our marriage, and would rather be free. Please return my letters and ring. Hoping you will not think too hardly of me, for I think it better that we part now, as circumstances are forcing me to take this step.

“SANFORD TERRELL.”

Alene did not faint, but retained all her will power, and after recovering from the dazed feeling softly called her mother, and handed the letter to her, who, after having read it and thinking for some moments, asked: “Are you sure it is from Sanford?”

They examined the writing and postmark very carefully, and Alene said : " Yes, it must be from him."

" Then I see nothing for you but to do as he says. My poor child, I wish you had been spared this trial."

" I am glad it came now," she answered.

Next day she returned his letters and ring, going to the office herself. Up to this time she had not faltered, but now the reaction of wounded love and pride set in, and even her strong nature bent then and broke before the tide of pent-up feeling. Coming in and sitting down beside her mother, she murmured bitterly " Is all the world false and deceitful? Can none be trusted? Are there no true hearts?"

" My child, there are true hearts everywhere. If Sanford is unfaithful and unworthy of your love it is better that you should know it now."

" Oh, I cannot bear to think of him as being unworthy of my love. Perhaps he was misled, and thought me better than I am. But if it had been anything else than this."

" Trials come to us all, dear, and your most severe trial may be in this form. No doubt you will yet see why it has all been. God sometimes permits our light afflictions here, for He sees the end from the beginning, and will not send burdens greater than our hearts can bear. In time of trouble He will hide thee in His pavilion."

"But my life seems darker that if I had never known Sanford."

"Yes, Alene, when the light has been very brilliant, and goes out suddenly, the darkness is more blinding than after a dim light, especially if we have been looking through that earth star unto God."

"If I could only see light and forget."

"Dear child, when God gives us the clearest sight He does not touch our eyes with love, but sorrow. This is one of the hardest lessons youth is called upon to learn. But once learned it gives strength that nothing can take from us. Then we know the lesson taught will far outweigh the cruel pain. But it will not be best learned by telling ourselves that grief will pass away, and time takes the bitterness out of most things. Eternity will take the bitterness out of all things."

Anxiously they watched Alene in the days that followed. Temptations would come with full force to her now faltering heart. Hard was the struggle, for her trusting heart had trusted much. Just now she could see nothing but a blank—no bright light, all was desolation. Sometimes, like Elijah, she longed to die; at other times she drifted towards the shoals of skepticism; now towards those of hatred; again she would find herself losing confidence in humanity, then in herself. Next she would be losing faith in her Heavenly Father. She was suffering from the wound

as only a highly sensitive nature can suffer. How bitterly she was learning that love is the vital spark of woman's life, and that without love there would be no sorrow. But she had anchored on the Rock of Ages, and the Captain would not suffer her to drift afar off. She saw whither she was drifting, and falling upon her knees she prayed : " Heavenly Father, do not take Thy love from me or permit me to lose my love for humanity, or my life will be a total failure. Guide me, refine and purify me. Help me to trust Thee fully and follow Thee closely at all times, even though I cannot see the way, believing that all things work together for good to those who love Thee, and teach me to say 'Thy will be done.' " She reached for her bible, and it opened at the thirty-seventh Psalm. Her eyes rested on the words : " Delight thyself also in the Lord ; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in Him ; and He shall bring it to pass."

When she had finished reading the chapter a deep calm filled her heart. Again the light of love was trimmed, and she looked out upon the world with resignation. Her parents noticed the change, and thanked God she had buried her sorrow.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNG LAWYER.

BUT what of Sanford Terrell? Court was closed that day, and he had the satisfaction of having done his duty as faithfully as he had known how. In two cases, chiefly through his instrumentality, breakers of the liquor license law had been severely dealt with. He proved plainly that he was a decided opponent of the traffic, which made for him just then many enemies, but a few friends. He had already a heavy mortgage on the Gilbert estate, but had not thought of foreclosing it. The situation just suited him—a palatial stone residence out from the busy part of the town, on the side of a sloping hill. The town lay to the south and east of it, the grand river running west, and from the house there was a beautiful view of the sunset. A mountain on the north protected it from the cold winds. A few stately trees, and in summer beds of rare flowers, made it a rather desirable spot.

He was sitting in the office, almost tired out, when a friend came in and congratulated him on his success generally.

“But let me tell you, my good fellow, if you express your opinions on the temperance question so

freely around here you will be likely to get yourself into trouble."

"How so?"

"You are aware that some of the leading men oppose temperance?"

"Yes! What of that?"

"Some of them threaten to boycott you if you air your ideas so freely."

"When my colors are true I intend to hoist them high on the standard of principle, and stand by them until I die if necessary," said Sanford, with emphasis.

"I admire your sentiments, but they are not going to make you rich in Chester," replied his friend.

"When a man has to sacrifice principle and honor for money I pity him. He will be likely to lose most of it in this world, and if he does not, the interest will not pay his way to a better home."

"Are you thinking of closing the mortgage on the Gilbert property?"

"No, not unless circumstances force me."

"It is well, for I hear some of them say they would rather see it in ashes than to see you in possession."

"They might be worse scorched than I. But at the rate the owner is going it is hard to tell whose it may be before ten years."

"Well, Terrell, you look tired enough for me to say good-night."

When the door closed Sanford gathered up his letters and went to tea, saying to myself: "I am as cross as a bear. I hope I will feel better after tea, for I should write to Alene to-night, but I'm so tired. Surely she will understand. I wonder what is in this parcel."

After tea he went to his room and began to open the parcel, which he fondly hoped might contain a token of remembrance; but there was the ring which he had given Alene, then his letters. He was stunned. What had happened? "There must be some mistake. I must investigate." After looking over them he said: "No; there is evidence enough in these. They need not be afraid of me seizing the Gilbert or any other estate now. Fallen are my castles, gone my idol, fled my earthstar. Can it be possible my love has been untrue?"

He got up and walked the floor. "What does this mean anyway? Everything seems coming at once." How long he walked he did not know. Passion and pride fought for the mastery over his better nature until his brain seemed to whirl. He sat down and leaned his head upon his hands. "If there was one thing in this world which I coveted more than another it was the love of a true woman, and now —"

"Hush," a voice seemed to whisper, "if you

loved her as you professed, you would not even now say hard things about her."

"How can I help it?"

"You may not understand the circumstances," again whispered the one.

He put the much treasured letters into a neat parcel and thought "If I only had someone in whom I could confide," and pressed his hands more closely over his tired brow and whispered, "Oh, angel mother, your lonely boy misses you to-night."

Next day no one in the office of Terrell & Grant appeared to be particularly busy but the senior partner. He bent low over papers and manuals, with a heavy frown on his brow and a firmer set on his lips than usual. To him the clerks were making themselves very annoying. No one liked to see him in this frame of mind, and therefore acted accordingly.

"Terrell, take your nose out of that manual, or you will soon have a look on your face like the criminal law itself, and with your reputation of being able to make one white man believe another white man black. Look up," said Grant, who was rather fond of teasing Sanford.

Terrell did not move.

"As this is my last day in the office, I think he might at least try to look pleasant," said Nugent.

"His best girl must be going back on him," said Grant.

This stung, but Sanford knew that had Grant known the truth of his remarks he would not have made them.

"Sometimes it would be very much to one's own advantage to be deaf, and to other people's to be dumb," replied Sanford, hotly. Had he been in the habit of using superfluous adjectives he would have applied them now for the benefit of his companions. But he only sent the manual on to the desk with a bang, and got up and left the office.

"I wonder who turned the grinding stone for him this morning, he is so sharp," said Nugent.

"A pull through court such as he has had is enough to sharpen anyone's temper," said Grant.

"I saw McGonigal talking to him last night, and he seemed to be very much annoyed," said the junior clerk.

"There must be something wrong, for he is seldom in bad humor, and it is the first time he ever answered me sharply."

"Well, if he is going to continue wearing his face like a thundercloud and his eyes like lightning, I'm glad this is my last day in the office," said Nugent.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BROKEN ENGAGEMENT.

 WEEK passed and the possibilities and probabilities of the case revolved in Sanford Terrell's tired brain, but nothing occurred to solve the mystery. He tried to look cheerful, and was succeeding fairly well, but the heart knew its own bitterness. He was becoming listless and discouraged, in spite of the fact that his reputation as an honest and successful lawyer was fast widening. Fortunately for him he was employed by a number of capitalists to look after their interests in British Columbia. This he gladly accepted, as it would require him to be absent from Chester for some time. He speedily made arrangements to leave, and writing hurriedly to Edna Mason said he was leaving Chester on business, and not to be anxious if he did not return for some time. At present he was very unsettled, and might possibly go abroad.

Perhaps rather sadly now he boarded the train, and the following Sunday found him in a far western town. According to his well formed rule he attended church morning and evening. Returning to his hotel after the evening service, which had

impressed him deeply, he turned leisurely down a side street for quiet meditation, when he saw a child running towards him without coat or mittens, her golden curls flying in the breeze. As she came up to him she stopped suddenly and went to turn, but fell on the slippery sidewalk. Sanford lifted her up tenderly, and she cried :

" Oh, I to't oo was my papa. I want my papa."

" Let me carry you to your papa, dear."

The child stopped crying, and allowed him to lift her up and carry her in the direction from which she came. He turned up the collar of his coat, and asked her to put her arms around inside to keep them warm. Instantly the little arms were clasped around his neck, and the golden curls pressed close to his cheek in childish confidence.

" Where did your papa go ? "

" To church."

" What is your name ? "

" Baby."

" What is your papa's name ? "

" Jus' papa."

" Where do you live ? "

Baby pointed on farther.

" But my papa won't be home, an' nurse lef' me 'lone."

" You had better let me take you home, and wait for your papa."

"All yite. I like oo," and the child peered with her large blue eyes into his honest grey ones.

"Where is your mamma?"

"Her in Heaven."

The young man's heart was strongly moved, as he pressed the little form more closely to him.

"Here's home," and Sanford carried her up the steps of a very comfortable looking house. He opened the door at her bidding, and they found her father in the hall removing his hat and coat. A look of astonishment filled his eyes, but before he could speak the child bounded from Sanford's arms into her father's and cried eagerly: "Oh, papa, nurse lef me 'lone, to talk to some one. I jus' ran to meet oo. I fell and dis good man picked me up and b'ought to oo."

Her father turned pale and said, "Dear child, nurse should be more careful, I thought you were in bed. I came home by another street."

He turned to Sanford as he held out his hand, "Thank you, my good fellow, you have done a kind act tonight," and drew him to a seat in the sitting room. He took the child on his knee, and after recovering somewhat from his astonishment, and finding she was not even cold, asked Sanford if he lived in town. Sanford told him his place of residence, but that he was now going west.

The stranger looked at him kindly for a moment,

then he asked : "Are you a christian, my friend ? Are you journeying toward the sunset of eternal love ?"

Sanford looked puzzled, then answered : "I had thought I was a chrisuan, but lately feel weak, struggling and disappointed."

The stranger seemed to take in the whole situation.

"You say you are weak, brother. A weak nature will not struggle, but will be driven by the tide of temptation, and go crashing to its own destruction, while a strong nature will fight hard against the stream, holding fast to the cable until it anchors in the harbor. Disappointments and failures are often the paths which lead to our greatest success. There never was a victory worthy of the name without a great battle, though men conquer but to die. It requires less courage to go into the battle field, led by fife and drum and the booming of cannon, where the world may have the opportunity of shouting 'Hero' in our ears, than it does to fight some of life's battles within the citadel of our own soul, led into action by no other music than the dull thud of an aching heart. Yet the noblest conflicts and grandest triumphs take place within man's soul, and are not recorded in history. I can say with Sara Bolton :

I like the man who faces what he must
With step triumphant and a heart of cheer ;
Who fights the daily battle without fear.
Sees his hopes fail, yet keeps unfaltering trust
That God is God ; that somehow true and just
His plans work out for mortals."

"Thank you," said Sanford, "you have encouraged and helped me."

"That should be our mission as we journey along, to help each other. There are none of us so strong that we will never need help."

When Sanford rose to leave the gentlemen exchanged cards.

"Me, too, papa ?" asked the baby.

Her father took his pen and wrote "Baby Violet Walker" beneath his own. The two bade each other good-night with kindly blessing.

As Sanford walked back to his hotel he thought :
"No wonder that dear child has implicit confidence in mankind. Would that her trusting nature may never (if such be possible) taste the bitterness of a misplaced affection. Thus our links in friendship's chain are forged and dropped, never to be found again only by their bright reflection in our memory." When in his room he sat thinking, "I have found more real happiness in that one little act of kindness than there could be in anything now. I am not so hardened after all. Gold is tried in the fire, and

acceptable men in the furnace of adversity, flashed through his mind, and he exclaimed: "I will be as gold and bear the fire, and be worthy of my manhood's highest calling, to be more like the Master. So God help me. I will try to remember Alene only as I knew her, my ideal. 'I had fainted unless I believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.'" And he knelt down and prayed as he had not prayed for months. Thus good seed sown by the wayside may bring forth fruit for eternity.

CHAPTER V.

THE OPINION OF FRIENDS.

WHEN Edna Mason received Sanford's letter she went immediately to Alene for particulars but was surprised and troubled to learn the truth.

"There must be some mistake. I cannot think that Sanford would do such a rash and dishonorable act. No, he never did."

Alene begged her not to speak of the matter outside of her own home.

When Edna returned home the family were at tea.

"You are nearly late, Edna," said her mother.

"So I see ; but I am not hungry."

"What has happened you ?" asked Fred. "You look as if you had been struck by a small cyclone, or rather there are indications of an approaching tornado."

They were surprised to see Edna's usually bright face shadowed by such a dark cloud. But she sat down without a word.

"What is the trouble, daughter ?" asked her father. "Has anything unusual happened ?"

"No, it is a common occurrence, but that don't make it any better," and she told the story with all the indignation of her impulsive nature.

"It is very strange," said Mr. Mason.

"I am grieved that my brother's son would act in such a manner," said Mrs. Mason.

"He might have at least said where he was going. Unsettled, indeed! Not much wonder," said Edna, and her brown eyes flashed.

"I'll venture to stake my old boots he is not as unsettled as he would be if you were to come across him about now," said Fred.

"I feel like following the young rascal," said Mr. Mason, absently.

"A great race you will have, father, if you follow him to that indefinite abroad. You might have to crawl through to China after him," said Fred.

"Pity he would not go to China and stay there," replied Edna, bitterly.

"Please do not be too hard on Sanford. I would like to see himself for particulars," answered Fred.

"Of course; as you are a man you will take his part," retorted Edna.

"And why not? He is the most honorable man at heart I ever met, and there has been someone around not minding their own business, or I'm not Fred Mason."

"I wish I could think so, although I said as much to Alene ; but there are the plain facts."

"Sanford is old enough to know his own mind, and if he needs correcting I have no doubt but his conscience will follow him farther than anyone," said Mrs. Mason.

"How would it be if I should go and console Alene?" asked Fred.

"I am sure she is in a great frame of mind to receive consolation from you or any other young man at present."

"Well, as I have already cast anchor I guess I'll not mind."

"And where, pray?" asked Edna, quickly brushing from her eyes the mists which had gathered there. "This is news."

"That's the question," answered Fred, with a sly look at his father.

"I declare I shall be jealous if I think anyone is stealing my brother's heart. I will have no one to wait on me."

"How many do you want at your service? Lately another has been coming to relieve me of that duty, so what am I to do?" queried Fred, teasingly.

"I suppose it is only reasonable. I will have to excuse you," said Edna, blushing.

"You may as well, for I notice Fred only goes

out to spend the evening when some one else is expected to call," said her father.

"That is only of choice," replied Edna. They rose from the table and Edna began to clear away the dishes, for Mrs. Mason thought it a very essential subject in her daughter's education that she should have a thorough knowledge of all the details of housekeeping.

Fred threw down the paper and reached for his hat.

"Where is he going, father?" asked Edna, as he closed the door.

"You will have to find out. We are in confidence, but he is all right in the home where he spends his evenings."

The bell rang and Leslie Howard was admitted.

CHAPTER VI.

HELPING OTHERS.

ALENE Barton was still somewhat despondent, notwithstanding her efforts to be brave. She felt the need of a change, so about midsummer accepted an invitation to visit her aunt, Mrs. Hall, in Bayville. Mr. and Mrs. Hall were little past middle age, but sorrow had whitened their hair and slowed their steps. How glad they were to have Alene, with her bright young face and cheerful manner. Everything that was necessary for comfort in a home was theirs. Rare flowers adorned the windows, and choice singing birds sang from their perches high up amid the flowers, which were her aunt's constant care, and everything in and about the house was in order. But it was a quiet home, for, alas ! the childish voices which made music within its wall no longer rang for them, and little feet that left muddy tracks across the floor, and little hands which scattered toys at will, were still. Their first-born son—where was he ? How many times a day did they ask that question, but the answer came not. They tried to make everything as pleasant as possible for Alene, but beneath their cheerfulness she saw the stamp of resignation,

and an untalked-of sorrow which deeply touched her heart.

One day while there Alene, wishing to be alone with her thoughts, walked out into the country. When returning through a quiet part of the town, as she was passing a tenement house, she was hailed by a tired looking woman, saying, "Lady, will you please get some one to bring Dr. Darrow? Tell him Mrs. Harris is worse."

"I will go myself," replied Alene.

She almost ran until she reached the doctor's office. Fortunately he was in, and, her message delivered, she was turning to go, but the doctor, being a practical and energetic christian and having met Alene before, said :

"Miss Barton, you are a christian, I think."

"Yes," she answered.

"Then if you have time you had better come with me. You may find work."

They stepped into his buggy and drove rapidly to the house. The woman admitted them with a thankful look on her face.

Entering a small dingy room, Alene sat down on a chair, while the doctor went into the adjoining apartment. She, who had been brought up in the midst of plenty, with never a necessity she could not have, and seldom a luxury denied her, began to think, surely this is poverty—bare walls and floor and here

and there relics of furniture that told of better days. Two poor little children, aged about two and four years, looked hungry as they tried to satisfy themselves with dry bread.

Soon the doctor appeared, saying softly : " It is just as I expected. Her time may now be measured by moments."

Turning to the woman he asked : " Where is her husband ? "

" He left this morning ; likely he's drunk."

" If he is he cannot be of much use here."

He beckoned to Alene to enter the room. There she saw lying upon the bed a fair and once lovely woman, but now there were traces of grief and care and the wearied look telling that the delicate frame could not much longer bear its burden. Alene went softly to the bedside, her heart throbbing with pity.

The sufferer opened her eyes and whispered, " Where's Lyman ? "

Just then they heard a heavy footfall at the door, and a tall man with black eyes and curly hair entered. His face, blurred with the marks of dissipation, still bore traces of intelligence and refinement. Though he was somewhat intoxicated, one glance at the pallid face drove from his heated brain the fires of passion. For a moment he stood like a statue, then with a look of intense anguish, and unable to bear it longer, he rushed forward exclaiming, " Oh ! my

God !” and falling upon his knees he took her white hand in his, and slowly the great blue eyes opened.

“Lyman ! Oh, Lyman !”

“Oh, Nellie, my faithful wife, can you forgive me?”

Faintly she answered “All is forgiven ; meet me in Heaven.”

Then with an imploring look at the little ones, who were standing near the door, her eyes closed to open no more on the hard scenes of life.

Six years before Lyman Harris had married Nellie Tosh and taken her to a comfortable home. He had loved her dearly, but the love for strong drink conquered, and he went from bad to worse. Many times he promised to do better, but failed, and now as the little company retired the repentant husband was left kneeling beside the form of a devoted wife.

Alene asked the little girl her name.

“Mamie,” she replied ; “and this is Willie.”

The little fellow began to cry, and Mamie took him in her arms saying, “Don’t cry, dearie ; mamma’s sleeping.”

The doctor tenderly kissed them, saying, “The innocence of childhood.”

Some kind neighbors came in and the doctor gave them some orders regarding the funeral ; then he and Alene started homeward. They drove slowly now, for their work was done. Alene’s young earnest

face impressed the doctor very much, as he thought what his own darling might have been had she lived.

"One meets hard scenes in life, Miss Barton."

"Yes; it is so sad to see that lovely woman dying under such circumstances," she replied.

"Is it not well for her to be at rest?" he asked.

"But think of those poor motherless little children, left in care of a reckless father."

"True," said the doctor, "but an awful disease needs a strong remedy. He was ill-prepared to die. While her life failed to influence him, her death may be the means of saving him. Strange and mysterious sometimes are the ways of life. Down that street I could show you huddled together in a place they call home six children who are worse off than motherless. She is a drunkard, and their father is little better. In our human judgment we are prone to wonder why such a good mother was taken and the one unworthy of the name spared, but the mystery remains unsolved. Miss Barton, I will drive you round by Mr. Hall's. I have a patient down this street, and coming back I will stop at the grocery and order some things for that family."

"Thank you, Dr. Darrow, you are very thoughtful."

"Years ago," he continued, "when we lost our only child I thought it was hard, but two years after when I lost the wife whom I idolized, for a time I

refused to be comforted, and almost doubted the goodness of a loving Father who could take away one so beloved, while others lived on uncherished and uncared for. By-and-by I began to understand that she had been my idol—the veil between me and the great light; so I bowed in humble submission beneath the rod, and often now when I gaze upon sorrow I thank God—dear ones are safe where no evil can harm them, and I am caring for others and trying to meet them in Heaven.”

“You have learned much in sorrow, Dr. Darrow.”

“If it were not for our district schools we would know little of the rudiments of learning. But if we would reach higher attainments we must enter the high school and the college, and learn the mathematics and the classics if we would stand side by side with those who have. Still our knowledge is but a drop in the fathomless depths of learning. So in the school of affliction some only learn the rudiments, and not until we have been through that school of affliction, where the heart has been divested of its earthly idols, its pride and selfishness, its chords struck until they vibrate and re-echo with divine love, can our souls reach out in true sympathy to those who are mourning, and our hearts throb to influence all whom we may meet, whether their sorrow be small or great. Yet how little we know of the sorrow of the world. One, and only One, is able to sympathize

with and comfort all human hearts who need or will ever need sympathy and comfort, for He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

"Some are so much tried," said Alene, with tears in her eyes.

"These are they who have come up out of great tribulations and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," he answered.

They had reached her uncle's residence, and reluctantly Alene said good-bye, for she felt she had met a friend.

Going into the house she found her uncle and aunt.

"Surely, Alene, you have had a long walk," said her uncle.

"Yes, I have had a good walk, one on which I learned much. I have been so selfish."

"Why, my dear, that is impossible; you could never be selfish," said her aunt.

"But I have been absorbed in my own little troubles, which fade into nothing when I see others. I have had an object lesson this afternoon," and she related minutely, with all the feeling of her nature, the events of her walk.

"We must go and see if we can do anything for them," said Mrs. Hall.

"Your Dr. Darrow is a fine man. I am so glad to have had a talk with him," said Alene.

"Yes, the Doctor does not seem to think that to heal the body is the limit of his profession, and seldom misses an opportunity of doing good in some way. Some persons' conversation is like a flowing well beside the dusty highway in the scorching noon-tide heat. We draw forth easily, drink and are satisfied, going on our way refreshed. By a few words we are revived and encouraged, perhaps to the end of the journey," said her uncle.

"How is it that there is so much difference between people?" asked Alene.

"That is a hard problem, my child; some are naturally good, but I think there is a great deal in study and self-examination. They say that with a truly kind heart no one can be rude, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," he replied.

"Blessed are the pure in heart," said Mrs. Hall.

"If all would study and practise the rule: Do unto others as you would they should do unto you, there would not be so many heart wounds and blinding tears," said Mr. Hall.

"I think you might add, and not so many on the road to destruction. We read, it is impossible but that offences will come, but woe unto him through whom they come," said Alene.

"Hard upon those who seem to take pleasure in causing enmity between friends—who, instead of

pouring oil on the already troubled waters, throw in quicksilver," said Mr. Hall.

"Then let us see to it that the offences come not through us," said Mrs. Hall.

"I suppose the good and bad will continue to grow together, notwithstanding all our theorizing," said Mr. Hall.

"Perhaps a little more practical cultivation would be a benefit," said Alene.

"Where would you begin?"

"I think I would begin by training the children," she replied.

Her uncle looked at her and arched his eyebrows.

"Many of us set our ideal to perfection, but how far we come short of seeing it fulfilled in reality."

Then Alene remembered how far her uncle's hopes were from being realized in his wayward son, and she changed the subject.

In the evening Miss Brown and her brother called to practise a trio for the next Sunday evening service. Time passed pleasantly, but often Alene seemed abstracted, for her thoughts would ever turn to that humble dwelling, but most of all to the two little children left without a mother to cheer and comfort them. The next morning she went into the garden and gathered some flowers to take to that lonely home. As she looked on the perishing blossoms, more beautiful through nature's teardrops, or saw

some plant revived that yesterday drooped for moisture, her thoughts would wander to that sad group which today looked on the still form of wife and mother. She prayed that those young lives now fainting from want would find a way to live where their trusting, innocent hearts might expand in the beauty of love ; that some seed sown in the heart of their father would burst into life from the passion of his tears.

"Auntie, I think I will go now. There may be something I can do."

"Very well, Alene."

On reaching the house she was received by the same tired looking woman. Going into the room she found Lyman Harris sitting with his head bowed down, taking no notice of anyone. Only another victim to the curse of rum. She hoped he might find strength to overcome temptation and be restored to noble manhood. Her tears falling fast, she placed her little offering upon the coffin. How transformed was the face of the dead. Now every line of sorrow and care had left it, and only the girlish beauty remained. As she gazed on the silent form she whispered, "God giveth his beloved sleep."

The little children looked so sad, so wondering, as they called for mamma, and she would not answer.

Alene went out quietly, and returned in half-an-

hour with shoes and new dresses for each. After she had washed and dressed them she was delighted to see how sweet they looked, and went home with a strange feeling of mingled joy and sadness in her heart.

On their way to the funeral they were joined by Dr. Darrow, who never forgot his poor people. There were few to attend, no relatives living within reach. Upon seeing the children what was it made Mrs. Hall's great mother-heart so swell that she took the little boy on her knee and kissed him repeatedly? The years that were gone came back to her, when her own Carrie and Johnny were snatched from her arms in budding infancy. And Willie, where was he today? So long ago he left his home regardless of tears and entreaties, going the downward road and forgetting his mother and his God. Where, Where, oh, where was he now? Had she another heart treasure in the quiet graveyard? She would at least know he was safe. The finger of God seemed to be pointing her to those grassy mounds, to the helpless children, to her own deserted home, and she saw the meaning and went forth, her heart filled with a new project.

At tea she talked of the children, how much they reminded her of her own, and now they were cast upon the cold charity of the world.

Mr. Hall did not make many remarks, but when

they were alone he said, "Ellen," as he usually spoke when he had something important to say, "I have been thinking."

"Yes, dear."

"We have prospered financially, better than most people. Our home is lonely. Why not make a home for those two little children?"

"Oh, John, that is just what I wanted you to say, for I have been troubled to think how much care I bestow on my birds and flowers when there are thousands of children who do not even know the meaning of a kind word, and many of whom may be within our reach. These two anyway are without a home. How much more blessed it would be to spend some of the time doing good to precious souls."

"I have often thought of that, too, Ellen, but was glad to see you with something to take up your attention. Then the opportunity was not afforded, but now that it is let us make the best of it. So if you think we can manage, we will go and see about them tomorrow."

"Mary is a faithful servant, and I will not mind a little more care."

"They will help to keep your mind off other things," he answered.

As they knelt in prayer their hearts were full, but

they never failed to pray that God in His mercy would restore their own lost boy.

The next morning they went to see Lyman Harris concerning the children. He felt they must have been sent by Providence. Just now he could not make a home, and some one must until he could. He had vowed to do better, at the open grave of her who had loved him best on earth, and now he must do what was best for the children.

They were taken to their new home, and it was touching to see how they noticed the nice furniture, flowers and toys, and patted the soft carpets, and were so well behaved that they won everyone in the house.

At bedtime Mrs. Hall took them to a cot in her own room. When she had prepared them for bed she sat down, thinking how she might best teach Mamie her prayers. She was scarcely seated when the child knelt beside her, and, folding her little hands repeated "Now I lay me down to sleep," Willie following her as best he could. When she had finished that prayer she added: "Oh, Lord, bless everybody and help us to be good and kind. Bless mamma and Willie and me. And, Oh, Lord, bless and save papa."

Ah, infant lips, thy young heart hast early learned to pray for the erring. Who has listened to the prayer from childish lips, in trusting simplicity,

breathed out by divine inspiration, unacquainted with the forms of theology, a stranger to the shadows of sin, and has not wished they could be kept in the innocence of childhood. But it cannot be.

Softly Mrs. Hall sang. Softly as she had sung it years before,

“Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed.”

She lingered beside the cot after she had soothed the little ones to rest. Already her heart was comforted.

In a few days Lyman Harris called to bid his children good-bye, for he felt that he must leave his old associates, neither were old associations pleasant to him. The parting was hard, for the future was so uncertain. With kindly advice, and prayers that God would give His angels charge concerning him, he left Bayville.

CHAPTER VII.

CALLED HOME.

LENE had been enjoying her visit for a month when she received a letter from home saying she was needed.

"We will miss you so much," said her aunt.

"I will long remember this visit, Auntie. It has done me good. I think of my verse this morning, 'Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver ; I have tried thee in the furnace of affliction.' That verse seems to apply to you and uncle. We scarcely begin to thank God for His mercies until we have been refined."

"Will you come soon again ?" they asked.

"I cannot tell ; but we will often meet around our common mercy seat."

With many loving words they bade their young friend farewell.

The train steamed into Tilson, and how delightful it was to be getting home. Mr. Barton, Edna Mason and Leslie Howard were there to meet her. Almost her first words were, "How is mother ?"

"Not very well, dear. She has been lonesome for you," answered her father.

"We have all missed you so much," said Edna. And as they started down street together she continued, "I am just dying to tell you something."

"Tell me quickly for fear you fall on the sidewalk."

"Now, don't tease. I will just make you wait until I can put my arms around you and tell you nice."

"But you have aroused my curiosity."

"We will soon be home. I will come in the evening and have a long talk."

"Will you bring your friend?"

"No, he is going away on the evening train, but will come again before long."

"I understand," laughed Alene, significantly.

They reached Alene's home, and she bade her friends good-bye, and ran into the house and found her mother lying on the sofa.

"Mother dear, you have not been well," she said, fondly. "Why did you not tell me?"

"I did not wish to spoil your visit, and I will be better now that my beam of sunshine has come back."

"If you needed me I had a right to come."

"Your Aunt Ellen needed you also. Have they heard from Willie?"

"Nothing whatever. They are both quite grey, but they seldom mention his name now only to each other."

"We will have dinner. You must be hungry."

"I am hungry. Father, have you killed the fatted calf?"

"Not exactly. But I think Hannah bought a larger portion of a fatted lamb."

"She had prudent forethought, as it will require the larger share for me."

"You always have such a ravenous appetite, it is a good thing you don't board out," said her father, mischievously.

"And better, that I have such a large hearted man with whom to board."

"Then you had better stay with him, and not do as Edna Mason purposes doing one of these days, running off and leaving him."

"So I intend to stay, father mine. You may be prepared to have your generosity tested and proved."

"I stand ready and willing to face the inevitable."

"Oh, my unfaltering hero," she said, kissing him impulsively.

Hannah came in and was almost as glad to see Alene as her parents had been.

"I am sure Hannah will be glad to see you back, She has had everything to do while you were gone," said Mrs Barton.

"I am such a help to her."

"Mother will be able to eat more dinner than she has for a month," said Mr. Barton.

"I suppose father will not," answered Mrs. Barton.

After dinner Alene talked long and fluently of her visit, and in the evening Edna came in gaily, and she and Alene went to have a quiet talk, for they had grown very dear to each other.

Edna told Alene of her intended marriage with Leslie Howard. "And I want you to be bridesmaid. Will you?"

"Why, yes, and I wish you every joy."

"There is a Mr. Sparks, a very fine young man from Danville, to be groomsman, and I wish you would fall in love with each other," said Edna.

But Alene's eyes filled with tears and she turned away.

Edna threw her arms around her and said, "Alene, dear, did I hurt you? I did not mean to, but I am always blundering."

"No, Edna, you did not hurt me, but I am oversensitive to anything like that being said now."

Edna took her handkerchief and wiped the tears from Alene's eyes, and secretly wished she had hold of that cousin of hers.

The two friends had long talks together, and the days flew swiftly by, for there was much to be done. But they were precious days for both, these last few hours of maidenhood. And it was with something like sadness that Alene looked on Edna as a bride in the softened light that streamed through the colored windows of the dear old church where they so often had sat together.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

TIME was passing, and Alene Barton was ripening into more lovely womanhood. The one sorrow her young life had yet known only left an impression of tenderness and sympathy that enriches every woman's soul. Ah, fatal hour! Would it have been thus had her faith failed in that one trial? She would not now lean upon the strong arm which must uphold her in the trials that were still to come.

The pastor and his wife said they could not do without Alene Barton. The children greeted her with smiles. She was her father's and mother's comfort, the household angel. Her rich voice was greatly in demand, and she refused all invitations to sing from home, for she had now the care of an invalid mother. Time brings changes to every home, and was bringing changes to theirs. Unsuccessfully the loved ones and physicians had battled with the grim monster, but now they stood back, conquered. Slowly the messenger of death drew near, and the dark shadow of its presence grew deeper. Mother was dying. Softly the watchers moved and waited,

It was almost sunset when their loved one regained consciousness and strength to speak. Beckoning them to her side she whispered, "I shall soon be home. Alene, do not weep; God will take care of you. Dear husband," her breath coming in short, quick gasps, "'Twill not be long till we meet again. God shall wipe away all tears—there shall be no more death—neither sorrow nor crying—nor pain—I'm tired—"

She sank back in the pillows, her loving husband pressed those cold lips for the last time on earth, and in silent grief they watched the throbbing pulse-like cords unbinding one by one, freeing the soul from its mortal clay. The setting sun gleamed in the west as a bright token of the life now closing, then unseen to mortal eye her spirit passed over the river to behold the glories of that city where the sun never sets and the leaves never fade. How applicable were the words of their pastor as he preached from the text "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is the victory?"

How comforting to the sorrowing ones to know she trusted in Him who said, "I am the resurrection and the life." And it seemed as they stood beside the open grave that God had but transferred a tie from earth to Heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

LYMAN HARRIS'S TEMPTATION AND RESCUE.

When the storms of life are raging
And temptations dark betide,
In Thy loving arms protect me,
Let me in Thy love abide.

When my boat is launched to leeward,
O'er the troubled seas of doubt,
If with trembling I go forward,
Leave me not to fear and doubt.

When I'm blinded with temptations,
When I'm driven toward the reef,
If I halt without decision,
Saviour, come to my relief,

Far above the tempest's raging,
Far beneath its current tide,
"Peace, be still," I hear Him calling,
All my troubled fears subside.

ALL afternoon a storm had been raging over the city of Chicago, but a fiercer storm was raging within the bosom of Lyman Harris, who, without money or work was alone in that great city. All day that fearful craving for strong drink had burned

unabated, and in the evening he closed the door of his miserable boarding house and went into the street. The fury of the elements without had ceased and there followed a great calm. In deep despair he wondered if anything could still the tempest within his heart. The enemy was in close pursuit, as he always assails us in our darkest hours, when halting between right and wrong.

"You have started on the downward road, you may as well go on," said the tempter.

"Where will it end?"

"Nowhere can be much worse than this."

"But I promised Nellie to meet her in Heaven."

"Likely you are to meet anyone there! You have gone too far already."

Then a gleam from a brilliantly lighted saloon flashed upon him. There was light and comfort within, and anyone who had five cents was welcome. He put his hand in his pocket and turned his last dime over. Would he go in?

You who have never known the fierce pangs of appetite, or been torn by the fiery darts of temptation, and hurled through the darkness of bitter remorse and despair, until you have felt that the tortures of hell itself cannot be much worse than this, may stand coolly by and ask where is his will power, and where his strength of character. Beware, for you too may yet learn that you are but a man!

A cheery but gruff voice from within said,
"Come in and join us."

"He shall give His angels charge, to keep thee
in all thy ways."

Down the street was coming one, with firm, determined step, as a man only can walk who has a purpose in view, and he saw the aimless steps of the other—saw him falter and saw the visible tempter, and in his heart he determined to save him from the tempter, if it was in his power to do so. Then Lyman Harris felt a strong hand laid on his arm, and a kind voice saying, "Come this way, my brother."

Almost without the thought of resisting he obeyed the stronger will. And the words "my brother" were as balm to his aching heart. There was still someone in this great city who cared for him.

He allowed himself to be guided by his new-found friend till he found himself in the Y.M.C.A. rooms, where he was welcomed with kind smiles and handclasps that said, "We want to help you," and Lyman almost thought himself in a new world. As the two sat down together, he said: "You have saved me tonight."

"Thank God," answered his benefactor. "What is your name?"

On being told, he answered, "Thank you; mine is Sanford Terrell."

The meeting was conducted by one of the young men, and the simple and earnest appeal reached the heart of Lyman Harris, and ere the meeting closed he had found a safe refuge from every storm. Before he had been trusting in his own strength and failed.

When the meeting was over Sanford Terrell and Lyman Harris shook hands like brothers, and when they were going out Sanford asked where his rooms were.

"No. 20 Alpine Row."

"What business do you follow?"

"Bookkeeping; but at present I would be glad of anything to do, for I am out of a situation. I am a stranger here, and foolishly came to the already overcrowded city."

"I also am a stranger here, and intend leaving soon. However, come to No. 4 Park street tomorrow at ten, and I will see if there is anything I can do for you."

"Thank you."

As they came to a restaurant Sanford suggested that they go in and have some supper. "I think this is my treat."

He knew the young man's fare was not likely to have been of the best, and this also was helping him to temptation.

While they ate and talked Sanford learned that

he was from Bayville. And he even felt a more kindly interest in him than before.

Successful business operations of the firm of Terrell & Grant had widened their interest, and Sanford had been called to Chicago on business. He never forgot the lesson taught him in that western town. And many a man since then had felt new courage to live rise within him in the friendly grasp of Sanford Terrell. Even in the rush of business he was seldom too much hurried to lend a helping hand. There was something in the flash of his eyes which seemed to say "Do right and fear not—do wrong and you must bear the consequences."

He explained Lyman's case to the manager of the firm with which he was doing business. They were in need of more help, and consented to take him into their employ on trial.

The next morning Lyman appeared at the office looking much better, and gladly accepted his new position.

They found him to be prompt and efficient at his work, and by the end of a week were well pleased, and when Sanford left for a trip across the Atlantic he and Lyman were mutual friends.

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER TRIAL.

THE weeks and months were slowly passing by, and Alene Barton could see that her father was failing. She stayed very near him, and was even more kind if possible. One evening while she was reading to him he asked her to bring the small cabinet from his room. Opening it he took out her mother's wedding ring and a miniature photograph. After looking at them for some time, his eyes growing dim with tears, he handed them to her saying :

"Alene, these shall be yours when I am gone."

"Oh, father, do not speak of leaving me. What shall I do?"

"Lean hard on your Heavenly Father, my child. He will never leave you comfortless. The trials He sends may seem very hard to you now, dear, but when the clouds of earth are lifted and the mists have cleared away, and all mysteries are revealed, we shall understand why they have been. We cannot always see light, but there is light even behind the shadow of death."

"But I will be left all alone."

"That is the only thing which makes it hard for me to die—the thought of leaving you. God has promised to care for the fatherless, and He may be painting the most beautiful picture of our lives on the darkest background. Can you not trust Him?"

"Yes, father, I will try."

"Just then everything looked very dark to that petted daughter. She had been weeping as if her heart would break, but her father's words always comforted her.

"I am getting tired, the way has been long, but a patient Father has safely guided me, and I feel tonight that Heaven is not far off. Be of good courage and He shall strengthen thy heart."

Alene stayed near her father that night, for she well knew the treachery of heart disease, but he rested quietly, and was bright and cheerful next day, and talked of Alene's mother, and of the happy days they had spent together.

"Father, as the day is so fine, instead of taking a walk, will I order the horse and drive?"

"If you wish, Alene."

The horse having been brought they started, Alene taking her sketching materials. The grain was almost ripe to harvest, and all nature seemed to smile.

"What beautiful fields of wheat. But why is it,

father, there are so many thistles in this field and none in that, with only the line between?"

"One has been more thoroughly cultivated than the other," he replied.

"What would be the result if the field was ploughed and not sown?" she asked.

The fertility of the soil must naturally produce something, therefore weeds and briars would grow, but when properly prepared there is no room for tares."

"Is not that very much like the human mind?" remarked Alene. "If we would reap a bountiful harvest of thought we must sow with the purest seed. To cultivate is not enough, but it must be filled or the natural mind, like the soil, for want of something better will bring forth evil."

"I think it must be possible for our minds to be as free from evil as that field of wheat is free from weeds or we would not have such an object lesson," he replied.

"The rippling brook has also lessons for me," said Alene. "We see the tiny raindrops falling to earth, refreshing and purifying as they fall, going on and fulfilling the mission whereto they were sent, far more faithfully than we human creatures, for we so often lose sight of our mission to make the world purer and better for our having lived."

"What is the raindrop seeking?" he asked.

"Rest in the depths of the ocean."

"Now follow it as it falls to earth and glides smoothly on for a time—as it is now dashed against the rocks, then into the rapids ; now over the falls, again finding lodgment for a time in the cleft of a rock, only to be caught and hurled through a crevice into the channel until it reaches its destiny."

"This also teaches lessons in life," said Alene. "As the soul comes to earth and glides smoothly for a time, is now dashed on the rocks of doubt, then into the rapids of vanity, then over the bright falls of temptation, sometimes finding rest in the cleft of pleasure and folly, only to be caught again in the crevice of disappointments, and into the channel of bitter experience, never finding rest until it reposes in the ocean of God's love."

They had driven some distance, when they came to a hill where Alene thought she would like to make some sketches. Alighting from the carriage, they sat down beneath a shady maple on the top of a precipice looking southward. At the foot of the ravine was a small lake, with steep, formidable looking rocks on the opposite bank, while the lake lay calm as a mirror in the midst.

"What effect scenery has upon our poetic and sentimental imagination," said Alene, as she began to sketch.

"Another object lesson, Alene," said her father,

as he gazed upon the water lying so calm and peaceful amid its rough surroundings.

When she had finished the drawing she handed it to her father, asking, "Will that do?"

"The artist has done very well in imitating nature," and for a time he seemed to be gazing into space.

"What picture are you drawing, father?"

"Artists would fail to paint the picture. I see the grasses and lilies of the field, and from the ferns and shrubs to the mighty oak, and all the hills standing in grand array, praising their Creator until the sound is echoed and reechoed upon the everlasting hills."

"And what of man?" asked his listener.

"Man is utilizing all the benefits of nature, and seldom finding time to praise his Creator or the beauties of earth. But this is gladness for me, my feet resting upon the verdure-clad earth, to which this body the world now calls by name shall return, and breathing in the atmosphere the breath of God, and my soul gazing into the canopy of Heaven, where I shall go. Surely no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

They enjoyed the drive home in the mellow light of evening. Alene felt very much encouraged. Perhaps her father had not felt well the night before,

When they were home Mr. Barton sat down in his easy chair, while Alene went to put her things away. When she returned to the sitting room he said: "I feel tired. Will you sing my old favorite hymn, 'Jesus, Lover of my soul?' It will rest me." "

Alene sat down at the piano, and was singing softly "Safe into the haven guide" when she noticed her father's head drop. Running to him she called, "Father!" He cast one last loving glance towards her, she saw his lips move and stooped to catch the whisper "S-a-f-e."

She quickly sent for the doctor, and softly calling Hannah, together they watched him pass quickly over the border line.

The doctor arrived in a few minutes, and in answer to Alene's imploring look he took her hands in his and held them firmly as if to strengthen her, and said, "I am sorry, Alene, but I can do nothing."

"When mother died I thought I could live if he were only spared to me, but, oh—" she broke from the doctor's grasp and with breaking heart fled from the room.

Kind Hannah would have followed her, but the doctor said, "No; it is better for her to be alone till her first grief is over."

Tears were running down his own cheeks, for he had known Alene from her childhood, and loved her almost as his own daughter.

Then kind friends and neighbors came and took all care and made preparations for the funeral.

In her grief Alene found deep consolation in that whispered word caught from her father's dying lips, "safe."

And when the hour came when she must take a last fond look on the still features of him she called father she found great peace in the consoling words of her pastor, when he spoke from the text, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright! for the end of that man is peace." Through blinding tears she saw them raise another turf by another tomb.

CHAPTER XI.

FINDING A PRODIGAL SON.

THE wind was blowing cold and bleak as Lyman Harris closed the door of his comfortable boarding house and went out softly humming ;

“ Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying,”

and started into the highways and byways in search of some wanderer. He was still in Chicago, and fast gaining the confidence of his employers. He was now an earnest, faithful christian, and felt there was special work for every christian in the city. As he walked along he noticed in the glare of light a young man leaning against the wall of a saloon. There was something about the figure which startled him. Where had he seen a face like that before ? But he could not recall it. Lyman's now practised eye saw the hard lines about his mouth, and the obstinate chin, so he approached cautiously and asked, “ Are you going in here ? ”

“ I have been in.”

“ Then you might come with me and see if we can find a better place,” said Lyman,

The young man's first impulse was to accept the invitation, for he knew by the stranger's look he was in earnest, and there were visions of home crossing his mind tonight, and the foolish boy was trying to drive them away. But he had a strong dislike to those christian workers, and answered :

"I have no desire to be caught in your machinery for converting the heathen."

"Would you not like to know something of the love of Jesus?"

"I am old enough to attend to my own affairs, You had better attend to yours."

"I try always to be about my Father's business."

"Well, move on more quickly," said the young man.

Lyman moved on, his heart heavy with the sad thought that there are so many who have lost the image in which they were created, perhaps beyond restoration. The other smiled at his own hardness of heart.

A few evenings afterward Lyman was preparing to go out in company with a friend, Charley Edwards, when he said, "I say, Charley, do you ever feel discouraged in the field?"

"What has happened?"

"Only a little rebuff now and then."

"When you are as long in the work as I have been you will have met with many a discouragement,

Ten years' experience has taught me many lessons, but experience is something no one can learn for us."

"There are so many going full speed on the downward road."

"Did you ever see a team of horses with a heavy load on the top of a hill, the driver holding with all his might? If we would ask him why he does not let them run down he would likely say, 'Are you crazy? Don't you know if they once got started I could not stop them, and they would be smashed?' A good many know how to manage almost everything else in the world better than they know how to manage themselves," answered Charley.

"I was stopped while going down hill fast enough, when the sword of death took down my companion, and how nearly I was starting again, when a strong arm pulled me back."

"My friend, you will find that is the way many are brought to a sense of their condition, either by falling themselves or by the fall of the nearest one to them."

As they stepped into the street they saw a drunken man reel forward and attempt to cross the street in front of an electric car. Quick as a flash Lyman sprang forward and caught him by the coat, and by a sudden jerk succeeded in bringing his body back. The conductor stopped, although the accident had not happened through any fault of

his, and said, "You had better take him to the hospital."

"He will bleed to death before we can take him half the distance," as they discovered his left foot was gone.

"Take him to my room," said Lyman, and the two men lifted their burden, despatching a boy for the nearest doctor. With his landlady's permission, they took him in and laid him on the bed, while the doctor came and attended to his maimed limb.

"What do you think of him?" asked Charley, when the doctor was through.

"With his blood in this condition it is impossible to say what may be the result. He is very weak. I think it would be well if you could keep him here until morning. Do you know him?"

"We do not," answered Lyman, "but I will shelter him and try to do the best we can until he is able to be moved, or his relatives can be found, if he has any."

So the two friends prepared to spend the night watching, Lyman acting as nurse. As he sat down by the bed, and for the first time got a good look at his patient, he discovered him to be the youth who had repulsed his advances a few evenings before. Surely this was a strange incident. Why had he not taken him to the doctor's office, then to the hospital? But in his excitement he had thought of no place but

this. So he said nothing. All night they listened to the young man raving, sometimes of home and boyhood days, then of gambling. In the morning the doctor pronounced him conscious but weaker.

While Lyman bathed the young man's head he asked, "Have you any friends in the city?"

"No."

"What is your name?"

"Willie Hall."

Lyman started.

"Where is your home, or are your parents living?"

"I would rather not tell."

"Be sure that I am your friend," said Lyman.

"I know, but I am a wayward son."

"Never mind, then. Is the pain still in your head?"

"Not so bad."

Lyman went to the office and informed his employers of what had happened, and his suspicions as to whom his charge might be, and they kindly allowed him to take some work to his room. Lyman was greatly worried. Could it be possible this was John Hall's son, and he his rescuer? He could not think of having him removed to the hospital until he was sure. So he wrote to Mr. Hall, telling him that there was a young man with him who had met with an accident, who said his name was Willie Hall, but

would not give him any particulars, only that he said he was a wayward son. "He may not be your boy," wrote Lyman, "but he has the family resemblance."

After the doctor's call Lyman again prepared to spend the night as nurse. His patient slept fitfully, and in the morning was better, but evidently under strong mental anxiety. Lyman attended to his wants in a cheerful way.

"It is in a case like this we miss a woman's love," said Lyman. "Is your mother living?"

"I think so."

"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home," quoted Lyman. "I once had a good home, if I had only known enough to appreciate it," and he gave Willie some of his life's history, not disclosing the fact that he knew any of his, for when one has done wrong he is not glad to meet those who know more about it than he would care to tell. It pleased the boy to know that his would-be friend had once been on the same road, and felt more of a fellow-feeling towards him.

"Well, seeing you are determined to befriend me, I may as well tell you I left home seven years ago because my father's religious principles did not just suit me. I wrote home for a while, but when things began to get worse I quit."

"Do you intend going back?"

"No; I will not return as the prodigal."

"Are you becoming better by staying away?"

"No, worse."

"Then why will you not go back?"

"I could not grieve my parents by letting them see me in this state."

"I will do what I can now and when you are better if you will go back."

"It would kill my mother to see me like this," answered the young man.

"Not half as fast as your absence is killing her."

"But I have nothing to bring back but the wreck of these misspent years."

"Go back to your mother's love with the love you have taken, for remember you may roam the world over, under what circumstances you will, you are still your mother's boy. And if you know aught of human love, your parents still pray for your return."

The young man's heart was touched. Lyman reached for his Bible and asked: "Shall I read the 15th of Luke?"

"If you like."

Then Lyman knelt in prayer. When he arose he asked: "Is not that a good lesson in forgiveness? Do you think you could go home now, my boy?"

He shook his head determinedly. Lyman saw but one thing to be done—to patiently wait the com-

ing of Mr. Hall. And what if he should be disappointed?

After a while he was startled by Willie saying, "Oh, this is dreadful," appearing to realize for the first time that his foot was gone. Lyman took him by the hand and stroked his hair.

"I never thought I would be crippled like this."

"It is a sad affliction," answered Lyman.

"I'd rather have been killed."

"Hush, my dear boy; it is very sad, but it might have been worse."

"But how can I stand it?" wailed the young man.

"I know it is a painful experience, but will you not try to bear it manfully and await results?"

"I suppose I'll have to. But how can you keep me here at your own expense?"

"Never mind about that just now; try to rest."

It was a hard day for both. Charley Edwards came to spend the night watching, but Lyman was too anxious to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ANSWER TO PRAYER.

MR. and Mrs. Hall had spent much of the night in prayer, not measured by audible words, but when the heart is breathing out anguish God alone can hear, perhaps sometimes wondering if their faith would fail. They were sitting in the breakfast room when the letter was delivered. Mr. Hall read it then let it fall.

“What is it, John?” asked Mrs. Hall.

He did not answer and she caught up the letter, and as she glanced over the words she sank into a chair. Both sat motionless for a few minutes, then Mrs. Hall asked, “Oh, husband, what are you going to do?”

“I will go and see if it is Willie. I must telegraph I am going.”

He hurried out and Lyman received the message :

“Will leave by first train. JOHN HALL.”

John Hall never made preparations more hastily. Not a word was spoken, but they knew each other's

deepest thoughts. After he was gone Mrs. Hall sat weeping and dazed. The children could not understand why she was weeping. Willie put his arms around her and said, "Don't cry, love, we haven't been bad, have we?"

She put an arm around each of them and said, "No, my darlings, you have not been bad, and surely I have been more than repaid for trying to be a mother to you."

"Dear Mrs. Hall," said Mary, "do not try to work. I will do all. If there is anything extra you would like done, please tell me."

"Thank you, Mary. Just now I feel too overcome to stir. Do whatever you think is required for such a homecoming. I have kept his room just as he left it, only we must put in some potted plants. This all appears like a glad dream from which there is a possibility of awakening, only to find it vanished."

* * * * *

Lyman and Willie were having a quiet talk in Lyman's hour of spare time.

"Would you like to see your parents?" asked Lyman.

"I hardly know. This accident makes me feel

less stubborn than I did, but I will only be a useless wreck."

"My dear fellow, it is possible for you even under these circumstances to be a more useful man than you have yet been."

"That would not be saying much," replied Willie.

"You may yet do wonders if you will only take courage."

There was a knock at the door and their landlady called Lyman into the entry, and there he met his friend, John Hall. The well-tried friends shook hands warmly. As Lyman whispered to him the circumstances of the case a vague terror seized the aged man. What after all if this was not his son? But he was calm again in a moment.

"I must see him quickly."

"Certainly," said Lyman, and he led the way.

For a moment they remained in breathless silence, the boy gazing upon his father, white-haired with grief and sorrow; the father upon his son, grown old in vice; both scarcely able to realize the change. Then the boy stretched out his hands, saying hoarsely:

"Father, you have come all the way to meet your prodigal son."

"My boy! My boy!" And they were clasped each other's arms.

It was a scene for angels, and Lyman closed the door and went out.

The doctor said his patient ~~was~~ still too weak to be moved that distance for some days. So Mr. Hall wrote the glad news to the patient, waiting mother, breaking as gently as possible that which was sad. You mothers who have ever experienced in your life such a home-coming will understand it better than anyone can tell you.

CHAPTER XIII.

FINDING COMFORT.

Just to know that Thou art calling
When the storms of life beat high,
When my heart is sore with weeping,
Then, my Saviour, Thou art nigh.

Just to know that Thou art guiding
Through the darkness of the night,
Then to me Thy word fulfilling,
Turn the darkness into light.

Just to know that Thou art teaching
Lessons I had failed to know ;
That to which my soul was tending
In Thy mercy Thou did'st show.

Just to know that Thou art leading
Till my trials all are past,
Oh, my soul, in love abiding,
Thou shalt reach thy home at last.

THE sympathy of friends stimulates and upholds us for a time, and it is the power to sympathize which makes the human more like the divine. But then come the hours of aching void

within our hearts which we must bear alone, when all human sympathy is barred out, when words cannot be framed into sentences to express the deepest need. Yet it is in these moments the mystic veil grows dim between the seen and the unseen—when God draws aside the curtain, and the divine Comforter comes in with healing on His wings, giving us faith and courage to press forward to the prize of our high calling.

Such was Alene Barton's experience after her father's death. She wandered through the house, more lonely by its spacious rooms, and every familiar spot kept her memory tender. Her health began to fail, and kind friends persuaded her to take a change. So she left the home in care of an aged couple and went again to her aunt, Mrs. Hall, who had written to her of Willie's home-coming. It was with a sadder heart she went than she had gone before. To her just now life seemed to have lost all of its sweetness. Reaching Mr. Hall's shortly after Willie's arrival, the joy with which she was received cheered her immediately. Sitting down beside Willie she said :

"And this is my long-looked-for Cousin Willie."

"What is left of him," he answered, glancing sorrowfully toward his feet.

Alene's eyes filled with tears.

"We are so glad to have you with us."

"You all seem glad. The neighbors have called and treated me as if I had been the best in the world."

"We will forget the past, dear cousin, and be glad in the present," she answered.

They were all much helped by Alene's visit. Although her own heart was very lonely, she was learning to smile for the sake of others. Her friends persuaded her to promise to stay with them a year. Dr. Darrow called often, and they had long, refreshing talks. One day after he left Willie said to Alene :

"Do you know, I used to think those who professed to be christians were generally hypocrites."

"And are they not?"

Willie looked at her questioningly.

"Where did you get the idea? Was it in your home?"

"Well, I guess not. I think from my fast companions, or because I chose to think so."

"Have you proved differently?" she asked.

"I have discovered myself to be one of the biggest hypocrites I have ever known."

"How so? You are surely hard on yourself, Willie."

"Honest confession will be good for my soul. I knew all the time I was doing wrong, yet rushed down the broad road, declaring to myself I would not be side-tracked by anyone. Kind words were spoken to me by strangers, but I usually gave them some impudence and passed on. When I got into trouble they were the first to help me, and have stood by me ever since," and he told her of his encounter with Lyman Harris.

"The mists are beginning to clear away, cousin."

"I see things in a different light, anyhow. Dr. Darrow says an awful disease requires a strong remedy. I was bad enough, and have had to take this medicine, whether I liked it or not."

"This has been the hard part of the remedy, Willie, but will you not come for the cure to Him 'who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction and crowneth thee with tender mercies?'"

"I am unworthy to come," answered Willie.

"Did your parents treat you as unworthy when you returned?"

"No."

"Neither will your Heavenly Father treat you so.

' All the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of Him '."

" I have not faith."

" You only require faith to take you one step at a time."

" I will think it over," he answered, for he was not easily persuaded. But Alene thought he was not far from the kingdom.

One morning at prayer the chapter was read, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." And Willie came with his thirsty soul and drank of the water of life freely.

CHAPTER XIV.

STILL LEARNING.

ALENE received an unusually bright and affectionate letter from her friend Edith Morton, but she finished by saying "Dear Alene, I do not understand ; perhaps I only take fits of the blues when you are not here to comfort me, but I cannot help feeling discouraged. I am so weak, and do not like to tell father and mother, for it worries them so."

"That is so unlike Edith," said Alene to her aunt. "I think if she were only here Dr. Darrow could help her."

So Mrs. Hall sent Edith a very warm invitation to come and spend a few weeks with Alene.

When the warm, sunny days in April came, Edith arrived in care of her father, who, after consultation gave her into the professional care of Dr. Darrow. He found her to be suffering mostly from nervous trouble, and liquor enough prescribed for her daily use to do an ordinary toper. This, he insisted, must be stopped, as it only stimulated the nerves for a time, leaving them weaker than before. To effect a permanent cure they must be nourished from their

centre. "If you are not better in three months," he added, "we won't charge anything."

It was the merry month of May. Mr. and Mrs. Hall were looking years younger. Willie was trying to walk on his new foot, much to the delight of all, especially to the children, for to them it was indeed wonderful; and he was trying to redeem the past. Edith appeared to fail at first, but was now improving every day. They persuaded Alene to sing again, for she could seldom sing without weeping, but the talent was hers to use, and she seldom sang without moving her listeners to tears. Her sad, sweet face and figure, clothed in mourning, touched the hearts of the people, and prepared them for the song. She was much at home doing with her might what her hand found to do. Her friends often wondered how they would do without her.

In June Lyman Harris came to spend his vacation at Mr. Hall's. While there he talked much of his friend Sanford Terrell, quite unconscious that Alene knew anything about him. Perhaps she might be excused for wondering if he could be as noble as represented.

One morning Lyman came in after having a frolic with the children, and went to his room to study classic Latin. He was sitting by the open window, mentally wading through the History of Rome, by Tacitus, when shouts of merry laughter coming from

the direction of the garden drew his attention. He looked out, and there was Miss Morton playing tag with the children. For the next few minutes it is hard to tell if he knew whether it was Tacitus or himself who had written this History of Rome. He lost interest in dead languages; living voices were far more attractive.

For the first time since his wife's death visions of a happy home crossed his mind. In vain he looked at his book and tried to read, then leaned back in his chair to think. He was still musing, when the bell rang for dinner, and they all gathered into the dining room.

"This is something like a family," said Mr. Hall, as he took his place at the head of the table. "I declare I feel younger than I did ten years ago."

After dinner Mr. Hall and Willie went down town to attend to some business, and Mrs. Hall took her afternoon nap. Lyman took the children for a drive. Alene and Edith went on to the lawn and were resting in the shade of a willow tree when they were startled by "Oh!" and a pitiful wail.

"What is that?" said Edith.

But Alene was out through the wicket gate in a moment.

"For shame," she cried, as she came suddenly upon two big boys teasing a little lad known as Cripple Jim. The boys looked in astonishment at

the dainty lady speaking in such a determined tone of voice. "Boys," she said, "you expect to be men sometime, don't you? Yet you will hurt a poor little fellow like this. Men who are worthy of the name never take advantage of the weak. You are showing your weakness instead of your strength when you act in this manner, and are only worthy to be called cowards. You understand me?" she asked.

They ran away, we hope not to forget.

They took little Jim into the house and washed his hands and face. Tears were running down his cheeks, and Alene said, "Don't cry; you'll be a good man yet."

They gave him a comfortable dinner, talking kindly to him all the time. When he had finished his meal he thanked them in his humble manner and went away, and the young ladies returned to their seat under the tree.

"I declare," said Alene, with spirit, "I never feel so much like fighting as when I see any one not able to defend themselves imposed upon."

"Nor I either," said Edith, "but I did not think you ever felt like fighting."

"Well, I do; all the indignation of my nature seems to rise under such circumstances."

"I was afraid when you spoke to those boys the way in which you did, for I am so timid myself," said Edith.

"We learn by observation of humanity that tyrants are always cowards. They are quite brave while in company with those whom they can frighten by their physical strength or domineering, but when some one who is really brave steps forward, how quickly they will crawl out of their self-asserted position and assume an air of meekness and humility, and there is no more effectual way of showing one's own weakness of character than by oppressing the weak," said Alene.

"Yet how many fail to see it in that light. Defects cannot always be remembered at will, and I never see anyone laugh at a physical deformity or mental weakness, hereditary or by disease, but I behold them displaying a far greater deformity within their own soul," said Edith.

"That must be owing to their inability to see beneath the surface. God has breathed into them the same living soul, not remedied by physical weakness, but they have covered up that soul instead of putting it in position to receive nourishment from the source by which it is to be developed into the higher possible attainment for man, just as this little flower would fade and die if covered from the elements which keep it alive," said Alene.

"Generally those who are continually looking for faults in others are trying to find a cloak with which to cover their own. We cannot rise above our ideal.



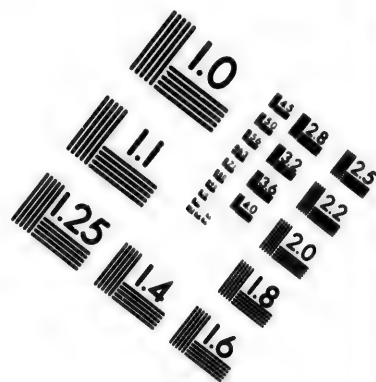
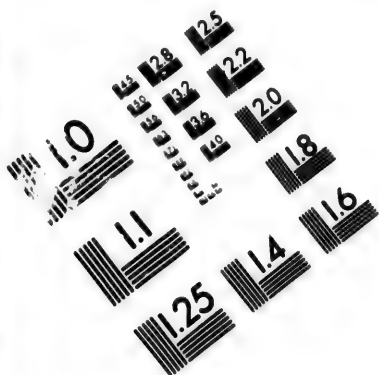
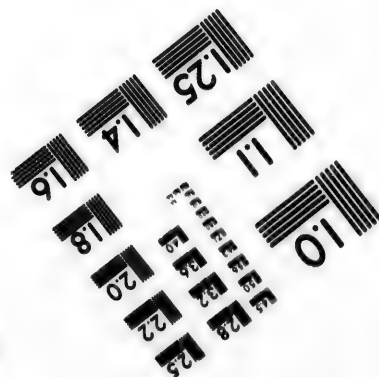
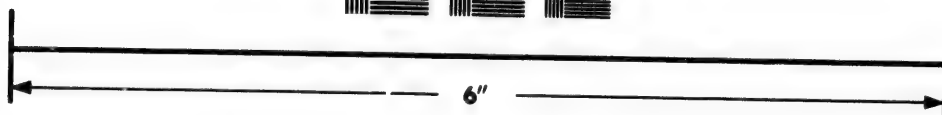
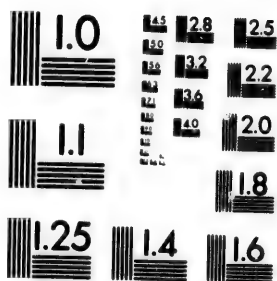


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I often think of that homely saying, 'If you don't want your bushel filled with chaff, you had better fill it with wheat.' We must lift in the wheat, but the chaff will blow in," said Edith.

"That is why so many minds are filled with chaff; they are too negligent to secure anything more valuable, so quite unconsciously their intellect becomes filled with the refuse that blows with every wind," said Alene.

"What of those who have not had the opportunity of learning better?" asked Edith.

"That question has perhaps puzzled theologians, so please excuse me just now. I was speaking of those who, hearing will not understand, and seeing, they will not comprehend. We who stand in the full blaze of light will personally have to settle our own account. Truly an honest man is the noblest world of God—honest with his own soul and God consequently honest with the world," said Alene.

"Some would have us believe there are none such," said Edith.

"I think there come to us all times in life when we cannot see beyond our own narrow sphere and judge accordingly. But if our own heart be true it will serve as the strongest magnet with which to search for truth in others. God created man in His own image, and we know he never allowed that to be lost, and will not to us, although sin has so often

marred the impression in humanity that we fail to see the resemblance. 'Then some one comes forth with the Christlikeness so stamped upon their soul and shining out in brave defiance to the world, and in bold relief against a muddled and disfigured background. Again we are reminded that Christ came to restore man to His image," said Alene.

"If I did not believe that He is able to completely restore fallen humanity I would have become discouraged long ago," said Edith.

"What grand encouragement," said Alene, "but how hard it is to learn that knowledge and perfection come through obedience."

"I think," replied Edith, "we do not consecrate our crosses as we should. We bear them as great burdens or because we must, forgetting that they are to make us more like Jesus."

"With our short sight it often looks very dark behind the cross," said Alene.

"During my illness I often thought it would be easier to die than to live, and have longed for a stroll on the heavenly shore, where earth-weary feet shall grow weary no more. I have wondered if that was a cowardly feeling—to be afraid to face the trials of life."

There were tears in Alene's eyes when she

answered, "When we are far from home and loved ones do you think it wrong for us to long for their companionship and love? We know this is not our abiding city."

"The presence of our loved ones will make it home to us, and what a gathering that will be," said Edith.

"Yes, think of it," said Alene. "Poor crippled Jim will find rest from his pain and teasing and his strength renewed as the eagle's. Fanny Crosby will no longer need to pray 'Draw me nearer.' Her blind eyes are beholding what a wonderful Saviour is Jesus her Lord. Frances Ridley Havergal has left the cross of her life behind. Wesley found refuge in the Lover of his soul. Newman leads safely thither by His kindly light. Paul will be there, having burst the prison bars and left the executioner's block behind, knowing that 'to die is gain.' Our discordant voices will be tuned aright to sing with the millions on high, 'with our loved ones and the saved of every nation' will together join with Thomas Moore in realizing that 'Earth has no sorrow but Heaven can remove'."

The young ladies were still meditating when Mrs. Hall called from the window that she would like something good for tea. When they wished anything particular cooked they appealed to Alene.

Immediately after tea was Mr. Hall's hour for family prayer, afterward the evenings were spent in a social way or attending meetings. Thus the days were spent at Mr. Hall's.

About the end of the month Lyman left to go back to the city, and how strangely this strong, brave looking man contrasted with the weak, faltering one who had bade them good-bye once before.

In September Edith returned home almost restored to health.

CHAPTER XV.

THE COST OF REVENGE.

IN a quiet, well-furnished room in Tilson, sitting propped in an easy chair, was a young man with a pale and haggard face and hacking cough that told its own sad story. He was in a restless state of mind, thinking to himself: "I do wish I had not done that; revenge has not been so sweet as I thought, but, oh, how bitter! Had I understood myself as well then as I do now I would have known my jealous nature could not have been happy with one so much my superior. She would have outgrown my love in one year, and then what would life be for her? It was her money I wanted most. I went away with the idea of making enough money to buy a girl like Alene Barton. And now I am dying and all the gold in the Yukon cannot purchase for me a moment of time or a clear conscience. I wonder if she is soured, or have I blighted two lives?"

It was in this frame of mind Mrs. Leslie Howard, who was on a visit to her parents, found her old acquaintance, Dick Nugent, she having heard of his illness and called to see him.

"I am so glad you came," he said, holding out both hands to Edna. "You are just the one I want to see."

"I am sorry to find you so sick, but hope you will be better soon," said Edna.

"No, Edna, I do not expect to be better," he answered. Then he requested his sister to leave the room, as he wished to talk with Mrs. Howard.

"Edna," he began, speaking as one who had no time to lose, "I believe you to be a true friend, and I want to make a confession. You remember Sanford Terrell's engagement with Alene Barton?"

"Yes."

"Well, I believe I was the means of that being broken."

"You! How?" asked Edna, with surprise.

"I know you will think me wicked, but when I was at Chester Terrell had a heavy lawsuit on hand. I understood the circumstances thoroughly, and as I was an expert at copying, and knew his writing, private and business, first I thought it would be a good joke to copy his writing and send a letter to Alene. Then the pride and jealousy within me determined to have revenge. If I did not succeed in breaking the engagement I would at least make a ripple on their sea of happiness. So I wrote the letter and awaited results. It was a daring trick, but the plan worked better than I expected. When they

were not married no one knew the reason better than I. Poor Alene! She who had never done me a wrong, had knelt by my side and pointed me to a higher life, what she might have been spared, and myself spared the bitterness of letting the fires of jealousy burn out the best impulses of my nature."

"But, Dick, have you not been punished sufficiently already?" said Edna, fearing the result of his excitement. "Are you not forgiven?"

"God in His mercy has pardoned my sins, but the memory is indelible. I am still where wrong may be made right, and am thankful I was brought to my senses before it was too late. For many who stand with poisoned arrows, ever ready to shoot them from the shaft of their jealousy, malice, envy or pride into some pure and innocent heart, and leave it torn and bleeding, perhaps dying from the wound of their venom sting, never realize the pain they are causing, or worse, don't care, and only think they have done something smart. But when one is dying it is poor satisfaction to have been making it harder for some one else to live. That thought is most bitter of all—to have been wounding instead of healing. The Comforter may come and pour healing balm on the wounded heart until it won't hurt any more, but I do not think even He can remove the scar. There was no use in telling Alene, and I dared not tell Terrell. Now, Edna, I want you to

keep this secret. I know you are true and may find some way to make it right if it is possible."

"You may rest assured, I will try," replied Edna. "Thank you. Now I think I can die happy."

With a few comforting words they bade each other a sad farewell.

After Edna returned home Leslie noticed her sad. She told him of Dick Nugent's illness, but kept the heavy secret in her heart, and he, like a good husband, asked no questions, for he knew she would tell him anything he ought to know.

"An incident which came before my notice lately has made me realize so much that there are none of us who can afford to speak evil of our fellow creatures. There may be some satisfaction in it at the time, but it is only robbing our own soul of the graces none of us can very well spare. 'Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.' If we injure a person materially we may pay it back. Boys may draw in their white winged kites, but the cruel word is gone forever," said Edna one evening as they were having their after-tea chat.

"I think it is impossible for a narrow mind to stand in the broad light of an unselfish one without feeling condemned and endeavor to find comfort by throwing slurs. One of the laws of nature is that one cannot throw mud above him without sinking himself deeper into the mire; but mud always washes off the

pure. I was going to say, unfortunately, the larger the heart the more capable it is of suffering, but then also the more capable it is of being a joy and a blessing. I do know if all were as true hearted as my little wife, living would be much less of a load," said Leslie, tenderly.

"How slow the world is to comprehend that the living are here to bless or blight ; the dead are God's, and He will judge aright," replied Edna, gently.

In about a month after this Edna received a letter from home telling her of Dick Nugent's death, and she earnestly prayed that she might be enabled to keep her promise, and there was many an impatient sigh within her heart for tidings of her friend. She had written to Sanford's partner, Mr. Grant, but had received the reply that Sanford was then in England and that they could not say when he would return, and Edna felt discouraged.

CHAPTER XVI.

MATED.

THE months were now passing pleasantly to our friends in Tilson. It was good to see Edith Morton going among her companions once more.

One day in June, when Lyman was again on his way to Mr. Hall's, he called on the Mortons. While he and Edith were talking together he suddenly asked: "Miss Morton, do you know anything of my past life?"

"Mrs. Hall told me why your children were with her," she answered.

"Then you know how far my appetite for strong drink led me?"

"Something."

"I am trying by God's help to be a man worthy of the name. Ever since our meeting a year ago I have loved you, but feel keenly my unworthiness. Still I ask, can you trust me?"

"Knowing as much of the appetite for strong drink as I do, I should be the last to condemn you."

Lyman looked at her inquiringly.

"You know the amount of liquor I was using daily, but you do not know of the struggle it cost me to give it up. I did not realize my fondness for the

stuff until I began to try. At first I was tempted to write for them to take me home, with the plea that I was growing weaker. No one but God and myself know of the hours I stayed up in my room to pray when they thought I was sleeping. Then there would be another victory. Dr. Darrow watched over me like a father, and I believe I almost owe my life to the faithfulness of that kind doctor. I shudder even now when I think of what might have been the result through lack of knowledge."

"Then, Edith, there is a deeper sympathy between us. We shall know better how to help each other, and together work for the good of those who are weak," said Lyman. "I long for a home and companionship, and to have my children with me again. Therefore I ask the privilege of winning your affection? May I?"

She answered "Yes."

As we might expect, Lyman and Edith became engaged.

When he went with his request to Mr. and Mrs. Morton they said:

"We have looked upon Edith as an invalid for so long we can scarcely think of giving her up. For that reason you may not find her a very good help-mate," said Mr. Morton, with an air of one who was judging a culprit.

Very calmly Lyman replied; "Mr. Morton, if I

was not willing to take care of her under any circumstances I would not ask you for her, but I think no sacrifice which I can make too great for the sake of companionship with one so pure and noble. I ask by the right which God has given to love, cherish and protect."

"As you have proved yourself an honest man, we cannot refuse."

"Thank you. May you always find me worthy of your confidence," answered Lyman, as he left the room to find Edith.

The wedding was arranged to take place about the New Year; and now they must send for Alene to come. Annie was still the same gentle girl, and since her engagement with Fred Mason there was sadness mingled with joy in the household. Fred was a fine fellow, and well worthy of the love of a true woman, but they would be very lonely without their girls.

"I will be with you all summer, and then you will not miss me very much, for I can run in to see you every day," Annie would answer to their murmurings.

"Yes, that will be a comfort," her mother would reply.

Yet the children little understood how hard it is for some parents to give their children into the care and protection of others,

CHAPTER XVII.

GOOD NEWS.

 HAVE good news for you tonight, Edna," said Leslie Howard, as he came in one evening.

"Rev. Mr. Smith told me he attended a temperance meeting at Chester this week. Among the speakers was a Mr. Harris, late of Chicago, and a Mr. Terrell, a young lawyer. I am sure he is Sanford."

"Oh, I am so glad," cried Edna. "I do hope Sanford is back again."

"And in conversation with Mr. Harris Mr. Smith told him of the great temperance entertainment we purpose having later, and invited him to come. Mr. Harris said the only time he could conveniently come would be December 24th, when on his way to Bayville. However, this is the night of our committee meeting, and we will have it settled. Will you come, Edna?"

"Of course I'll come. When do you ever get anywhere in the evening without me? I don't want to stay alone in the house only when I have to."

Generally at committee meetings some one will oppose every movement, but whether it was the effect

of the clear, frosty air or a better spirit of goodwill than usual we cannot say, but when Mr. Smith explained his plan all were satisfied. If any thought differently they were gracious enough to keep quiet.

Mr. Grey, the leader of the choir, proposed that they invite a soloist from a distance to make the music more attractive and also lighten their duties.

Leslie Howard proposed Miss Barton. She was a stranger, but then they could trust a recommendation by Mr. Howard. Further arrangements were left in the hands of the committee.

On their way home the Howards called at the post office.

"A letter for you, Edna."

When they were in the house and turned on the light Edna sat down and eagerly devoured the contents of a letter from her mother.

"Listen, Leslie," she exclaimed, "mother has had a letter from Cousin Sanford. He is in Chester. She says there are sad touches in his letter and excuses for not having time to visit them this winter. She asks me to write to him. Edna fairly danced for joy, and now she explained her plan to Leslie.

"I'll bring Sanford here for Christmas if he can be brought."

"I hope, dearest, you will succeed, and that your hopes may be realized."

"Now I must write. I know they will come for me if they will for anyone."

"Doubtless," replied her husband.

When Alene received Edna's kind letter of invitation on behalf of the committee, she was helping Edith to prepare for her wedding.

"What shall I do," she asked Edith, who, as usual, helped her with her plans.

"If your parents were living I know they would wish you to go. We will miss you very much at Christmas, but we must not be selfish as you have not been to visit Edna since her marriage. I know the trip will do you good, and you will also be helping in the temperance work. You will have plenty of time to be back before the New Year." So Alene accepted the invitation to Danville.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

T was a dreary night (the last of November), and the wind was moaning through the majestic maples, which seemed to mourn the loss of their summer dress. The rain was beating against the windows as if seeking rest within. A night which makes one thankful for a home, yet fills them with a loneliness they cannot express.

"How strangely uncertain is fortune," said Sanford Terrell. "A few years ago some would rather have seen this place burned than in my possession."

"How did you come into possession?" asked Lyman Harris.

"I held a heavy mortgage on it, but expected it to be paid through time; but the owner died. My partner informed me that it was for sale, so I came back and paid the few hundred dollars the mortgage did not cover on this and the cottage adjoining; now the cottage is yours and this is mine."

"We have long been friends," said Lyman; "now we are to be neighbors, for which I am glad."

"You have bright prospects of a happy future before you, Lyman."

"How much of which I owe to you, Sanford, I can never tell."

"Do not thank me ; I only acted the part of a man, and there are none more sincere in their congratulations than I."

"I am sure of that, Sanford. I can never repay you for your kindness to me. Edith and the children will love you as my brother and you must come and see us as often as you can."

"Thank you."

Lyman Harris, after spending a few years in Chicago, wishing to make his home in his native land, had secured a good position in Chester, and now he and Sanford Terrell were sitting beside the fire in Sanford's elegantly furnished library.

"I do not know why I need this house, only for the satisfaction of having a place to call my own," remarked Sanford, as he leaned back on the sofa, "but it seems to be what we have not got in this world which we think if we had would make us perfectly happy. Financially I have been very successful, but ——" He stopped.

"You should try to be comfortable and happy in these surroundings," said Lyman.

"Yes, if happiness consists in the material

things of life; but it is hard for a fellow to feel happy if his heart is a desert."

"Come, friend, do not get such a melancholy look on your face. We all know better than that of your heart. Think of the night you found me, a wanderer, and of similar deeds of kindness. But apart from those things, I know there is a mighty oasis in your heart, if only found by some good creature."

"Perhaps there may be, but tonight my thoughts go back to the days gone by," and he sat silent.

"To days of yore, when you were a prisoner within the courts, but acquitted at the bar and given your freedom by a fair judge."

"Oh, Lyman, strike easy," said Sanford, with a start.

"I beg your pardon, Sanford, I did not know I was touching a wound or I would have been more careful."

"You are quite excusable, Harris," and Sanford got up and stirred the coals in the grate, then leaned against the mantel. "The wound should have been healed long ago, but it is wonderfully fresh tonight. It may be well for me to be awakened," and he told Lyman some of the past.

"They say a heart is easily caught on the rebound, but I do not think mine has ever rebounded."

"Did you never think of investigating?" asked Lyman.

"Sometimes I think I should have, and it is that which troubles me most, now that I did not; but when one is stunned and gets into a dilemma, by the time he recovers it may be too late."

"You would certainly have more peace of mind if you knew the reason for such an abrupt action."

"Yes; but you know a man be considered clever, yet act like a fool in a love affair."

Lyman smiled. "Meekness is considered a virtue, but in this case I am not so sure. If it cannot be undone, I suppose you will have to school yourself to forget."

"Forget! Yes, I have tried, only to make a complete failure. Some things pass out of our sight, but never from before our mind's eye. A few persons in passing send a gleam from their souls which leaves an impression forever upon our hearts," replied Sanford.

"Is not that one of our greatest blessings—to have the privilege of meeting those with souls so pure and bright, who have helped us for time and eternity?" said Lyman.

"If we could only remember the good," said Sanford.

"I think that is our punishment here, that we cannot forget the evil we may have done. When we

think we have forgotten our sins they come tripping through our memory like ghosts to haunt us," said Lyman.

"But human nature is so prone to forget the good and remember the evil when our neighbor is concerned ; and I fail to understand why the weight of wrong done seems to fall on the most innocent," said Sanford.

"At the time it does, but not for long. That is the most bitter thought in my mind, that the wrong which I have done has fallen most heavily upon others ; but then how would it be for us if the burden of the sin of the world was not laid on the Most Innocent on Calvary ? How gracious is the promise if we comply with the conditions, 'Your sins and iniquities will I remember against you no more forever,' " said Lyman, solemnly.

The office boy came in with the evening mail. Lyman read aloud Mr. Smith's invitation to attend the entertainment at Danville Chrstmas eve.

"Will you accept ?" asked Sanford.

"I think so. If the trains connect I shall reach Mr. Hall's by midnight."

Sanford glanced wearily over a number of business letters, and sighed, "I am in no humor for business tonight."

Then he found one with a woman's handwriting. Opening it, he found a warm invitation from his

cousin Edna to come and spend Christmas with them.

"If I am Mrs. Howard," she added, "I am very much like the Edna Mason you used to know, and Leslie will be just as glad to see you as I, for you know he is the very best fellow in the world. Now, please come. We will have a long talk together, and the very best Christmas dinner I can cook. Your old tease, EDNA."

The forlorn look left Sanford's face now. The thought of being invited anywhere to spend Christmas but to Tilson was pleasant.

"Now, we can go together and have a good time."

CHAPTER XIX.

TRUSTED FRIENDS.

Sometimes the hands of earth
May sever a golden tie,
And leave some precious heart
Bleeding and glad to die.
It cannot last for long, friend,
For God is watching His own,
To make the darkest shadow
Dispel with noontide sun.

WHEN Leslie Howard came in one evening Edna almost overwhelmed him with "Oh, Leslie ! I got two letters, and they are both coming. Won't we have a happy time ?"

"Well, please don't choke me before that happy time," laughed Leslie.

"They sat down to tea, and Leslie asked a blessing, and as Edna poured the tea he said, "How much I have for which to be thankful—plenty to eat, a comfortable home and loving companionship—while so many enjoy none of these blessings."

"You have no more for which to be thankful than I," she answered, with joy in her brown eyes.

"I am so glad we are going to spend Christmas

in our own home. I will enjoy it more than anywhere else."

"So will I," she answered. "Sanford was delighted to get my letter, and said we might think him ungrateful not to write during his wandering, but when a man is trying to get away from his thoughts he may travel a long way and not succeed very well after all. How harshly I sometimes judged him."

"Alene will come the week before to visit with us and have time to practise with our organist. Fred will accompany her, but says he has important business further down the line, and must be home for Christmas. But you must read the letters after tea. I am in such a flutter of excitement I scarcely know what to expect or what may be the result of the meeting. How strangely nothing occurs for so long to change the routine of life, then events come rushing upon us with a bewildering whirl."

There had been a lump rising in Edna's throat ever since she sat down to tea, and now she put her head down on the table and cried.

Leslie had learned that the kindest thing to do for a woman sometimes is to let her cry.

After a while she looked up and brushed the tears from her eyes, and he said, "You must try to leave the burden with Him who watches even the sparrows."

"I am trying, dear ; but my prayers are being answered more quickly than I expected."

Edna was very busy in the days that followed. When the eagerly-looked-for afternoon on which Alene was to arrive came she and Leslie drove to the station to meet her. Fred was on the train, but declared he could not stay. "I will come again and bring ——," but the train hustled him out of hearing, for which he was just as glad. They could finish the sentence.

Edna was in great glee thinking of her other coming guest.

The friends had much to talk about, but the subject nearest their hearts was not mentioned.

When Alene would sit down at the organ to play some of her favorite music from Handel or Mozart, there was soft cadence in the first notes, then the wild, pealing notes as of a soul in anguish, then the joyful tones of victory. Her listeners felt that

"The sound was more than music—
'Twas somebody's soul that spoke,"

and thought her eyes were touched with breezes from a far-off clime.

Alene was always finding some work with which to help Edna.

"Are you always so busy?" asked Edna one day.

"Mostly ; once I thought I could not have lived

without my loved ones, but I have had to live on and hope on, glad that each day brings me some work—something that must be done. I think work and the strength to do it one of the greatest blessings to humanity, and there are other hearts beside mine that need to be cherished."

"You are so cheerful through all your trouble, Alene."

"I confess, Edna, while in company I often have to laugh to keep from crying, when some incident occurs which brings events of the past rushing through my memory like a mighty flood—those times when we seem to live years in a few minutes."

"I often notice those who have had the most real trouble are the most cheerful, and have wondered why."

"I suppose those who are in perpetual sunshine think shadows would be restful, and try to make some, but those who have been in the dark night of real sorrow try to gather and make the best use of the remaining sunbeams. There are persons who will live more in a few hours of either joy or sorrow than the others are capable of living in a lifetime.

On Christmas Eve Leslie escorted Edna and Alene to the hall and hastened on to meet the up-coming train. The gentlemen arrived in due time and entered by the back entrance to their seats on the platform as the choir began the opening anthem :

"There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch
o'er their flocks by night. And the glory of the Lord shone
round about them ; and they were sore afraid,"

Then the solo rang out sweet and clear :

"Fear not, for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy
Which shall be unto all the people.
For unto you is born this day in the city of David
A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Again echoed the chorus :

"Glory to God in the highest ! Peace, on earth goodwill
to men !"

A feeling of goodwill seemed to come over the
large audience. There was something familiar
about the solo which called one mind back to Tilson,
and he wondered "Can it possible?" but he could
not see the singer's face.

When Mr. Terrell was specially invited to give a
short address, there was one in the choir who
trembled, but chided herself for being so foolish, as
some remarks greeted her :

"They say he is a wealthy bachelor."

"You will have to keep your eyes wide open.
He is too old to be caught with ordinary bait."

"Tar Smith, who said anything about catching
him? You need not think because you do not
anchor here no one else will," came the answer.

"Will you behave?" gently demanded the

organist. "I am more interested in the speaker than anchoring anywhere at present."

"We don't doubt that," was the sarcastic reply. But they listened.

Sanford had grown more grave and dignified since Edna last saw him, but there was still the same keen flash in his grey eyes and the twitching of merriment around his mouth. Perhaps he betrayed his legal profession by making strong points, and, while his address was flavored with wit, he proved to have weighed well the realities of life, and had the faculty of getting his subject well condensed, and succeeded in pleasing most of the audience.

Miss Barton was announced for a solo and sang in her own sweet way "Please, Father, Dear Father, Come Home."

The lawyer knew now who was the singer.

Lyman Harris was a very pathetic speaker, and spoke as one who had known a great sorrow. He could hold the strictest attention of his audience; he had learned that power in the large mission rooms of Chicago; and as he told of scenes in the drunkard's life, of sadness in a drunkard's home, of little ones growing up in sin and vice, the audience was much moved. "Friends," he said, "it is always easier to go down the hill than it is to go up—that is why there are so many at the foot. It is not always that which we have done, but what we have left undone,

will give us the bitterest heartache at the closing of the day. And, ah me, I often wonder if in Heaven we will forget the good we might have done and did not. I find my heart's expression in Helen Hunt Jackson's last poem :

Father, I scarcely dare to pray—
So clear I see now it is done,
That I have wasted half my day,
And left my work but just begun,

So clear I see that things I thought
Were right or harmless are a sin ;
So clear I see that I have sought
Unconscious, selfish aims to win.

So clear I see that I have hurt
The souls I might have helped to save ;
That I have slothful been, inert,
Deaf to the calls thy leaders gave.

In outskirts of Thy kingdom vast,
Father, the humblest spot give me ;
Set me the lowliest task Thou hast,
Let me repentant work for Thee,

The difference between the speakers we have named on the subject was : The former spoke of what he saw and heard, the latter of what he knew and felt.

Alene again stepped forward with a self-forgetfulness only known to those who have the message they

are about to deliver burning in their heart. With all her strength of soul she sang ;

"Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest, for I, too, am a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

A perfect stillness came over the audience. It seemed to be the supreme effort of her life ; and as the last notes "Jesus said 'Come and ye shall find rest for your souls'" floated, then died away, some were weeping and some had learned to pray.

At the close of the entertainment Sanford was gladly received by Edna. He turned to meet Alene, saying, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men."

After leaving Lyman with a friend on his way to the station, as they were leaving the hall, Sanford asked :

"Miss Barton, may we have the pleasure of walking together ?" just as he might have spoken five years before.

She bowed assent, adding ; "Our friends do not look as if they were tired walking together."

As they walked along she told Sanford of her parents' death, and found a ready sympathizer.

When they reached home and were partaking of a late supper, Alene looked charming in her black

silk dress, with the flush of excitement still on her cheeks. Sanford thought she looked not less pure than the lilies she wore at her breast and in her hair. While the conversation flowed pleasantly, the lawyer, usually so much at ease in company, felt awkward—his heart was behaving cruelly; and both guests began to think their host and hostess were playing a cruel trick on them. However, when Edna drew their chairs around the fire they formed a very pretty quartette.

CHAPTER XX.

TRUE LOVE.

“Hark, the herald angels singing,
Earth in solemn wonder listen,
To the message they are bringing—
Peace on earth, goodwill to men.”

THE glad morning dawned clear and beautiful, a fresh fall of snow mantled the earth and sparkled in the sunshine, giving it a look of purity as it lay beneath its white robe.

The church bells chimed out a merry Christmas. The sleigh bells were ringing merrily as the horses sped along with their pleasure-seeking masters, no doubt many of whom never thought of the real meaning of Christmas. Our friends had done what they could to help the sick and afflicted, and were prepared to enjoy the day in the truest sense of the word.

After breakfast Leslie handed Sanford the Bible, and he opened and read part of the second chapter of Luke, and they knelt in prayer. They had heard Sanford Terrell in the courts of law ; heard him from the public platform ; had known him in the social circles ; but now they got a glimpse of the inner man as he talked with his Creator.

After thanking God for His goodness—a thankfulness he indeed felt in his heart—he continued :

“Heavenly Father, it has pleased Thee to take some of our loved ones to thyself since we last met together, and we are lonely ; in mercy Thou hast been good. Though we have been severed far and wide, Thou permitted us to meet around one common mercy-seat. When we were tempted, desolate and dismayed, Thou sheltered us beneath the shadow of Thy wings and hath not permitted one of our number to go astray ; continue to let the peace that passeth all understanding, that calms us in every storm and soothes us in every sorrow, and makes life worth living, fill our hearts and strengthen our lives, and bless our homes until we anchor in the heaven of perfect rest, to dwell forever with Thee.”

If Alene felt any bitterness in her heart for what she thought to be past offences, she forgave him while he prayed.

They attended church and listened to a soul-refreshing sermon by Mr. Smith, and Alene sang the solo in that beautiful Christmas anthem, “Peace on Earth.”

When they returned home they were able to do ample justice to the excellent dinner prepared by Edna, who said she found the geometry and composition of a dinner to be a far more useful accomplishment now than either music or painting.

“You know, Terrell, I find your cousin to be an excellent cook,” said Leslie.

"Not the least of her many virtues, I should say," said Sanford.

Edna laughed.

"I believe there is more virtue in a well-cooked meal to keep a man in humor than all the sentiment one can fling at him."

"He would surely be an ungrateful wretch who would quarrel with a sweet face even over a not very well cooked dinner," said Sanford.

"Does your accomplishment as cook account for the good natured expression on Leslie's face?" asked Ella.

"Well, you see a succession of poorly cooked dinners would seriously impair the digestion of both, consequently there would be a domestic squabble."

"There is logic in that problem," said Alene.

"With a good dinner, flavored with love, any man should be happy," said Sanford.

Edna darted one take-some-of-that-yourself look at Sanford, which made him look out through the window and stupidly compliment the weather.

After dinner Sanford was sitting on the sofa in the parlor, and Leslie, with firm hand, set Alene in a low rocking chair by the window. He could help Edna.

Sanford began to talk of his mother and Alene of her happy home life.

"You appear to be one of those, Miss Barton,

whom the bitter things in life have sweetened and strengthened."

"I have realized that some of the bitterest things in life come out of the sweetest, and some of the sweetest out of the bitterest."

"You have leaned hard on your Heavenly Father, and His strong arm has not failed you."

"How terrible would be the storm if there was no shelter or if we had no pilot on life's sea. It is in the storm he learns his skill. I think trials are allowed for our strengthening. Father used to say God knows with whom He can trust a burden. He has often to teach us lessons over and over, and make them very plain before we can understand. Even the Master was made patient through suffering."

Sanford watched her strong, true face. There was not so much of the girlish beauty as when he had first met her, but there was the strong impression of a beautiful and developing character, and remarked :

"This life is not a playground, but a schoolroom, and I often compare character in the stream of life to diamonds and glass. Place them side by side undisturbed and the unpractised eye sees no difference ; but strike with the hammer, and the glass will crumble into dust, while the diamond sends forth a light the world might never have known but for the stroke. Our lives are tested by the fire, and the

stroke shows our weak points, and those who have seen the sparkle from the real diamond are not easily attracted by the glitter of glass."

"Many of us have prayed, 'Lord, purify me, even though it be by fire'; but when it burned how we shrank, how in our disappointments and afflictions we almost forgot He had ever been good to us. But in it we learned to sympathize with the tempted and tried and with all suffering humanity, as we could not have learned otherwise, and and came forth from the fire, passed under the rod and through the darkness into the more perfect day. And how our souls have been fertilized by the tears we thought so hard to shed; but then the refining process is the same with souls as with materials—what would refine and purify some would utterly destroy others."

Sanford was sitting with head leaning upon his hand recalling Lyman's words. Alene was almost beginning to wonder at herself, but she continued: "I love that good old hymn of Bryant's:

Deem not that they are blest alone
Whose days a peaceful tenor keep,
The anointed Son of God makes known
A blessing for the eyes that weep.

The light of smiles shall fill again
The lids that overflow with tears,

And weary hours of woe and pain
Are promises of happier years.

There is a day of sunny rest
For every dark and troubled night,
Though grief may bide an evening guest,
Yet joy shall come with morning light.

Nor let the good man's trust depart,
Though life its common gifts deny ;
Though with a pierced and broken heart,
And spurned of man he goes to die.

For God has marked each sorrowing day
And numbered every secret tear,
And Heaven's long age of bliss shall pay
For all His children suffer here."

Alene had repeated these lines, her soul stirred by their deep inspiration. Sanford rose, and was pacing the floor, his heart struggling between pride and an unconquered love.

He halted beside her chair. "Alene, my heart has not changed since that memorable Christmas Eve. Has yours?"

Her head dropped, but she truthfully answered "No."

"Then why did you return my letters and ring?" he asked kindly.

She explained why she had.

"No such letter ever left me," he said, trembling with emotion.

It took Alene some time to realize that this could be possible, then she burst into tears.

"Alene, can you forgive me for the times I may have thought hardly of you?"

"I can. I also will need to be forgiven," she answered.

"How you have suffered through these years of loneliness without father or mother? I, who would have gladly spoken words of comfort to you in your affliction if I could—but for—. How I have suffered, but through it all, Alene, you were still my earthly guiding star. Have you still confidence in me?"

"Your bearing since last night has been sufficient to insure my lasting confidence," she replied.

"Then will you come and give me the right in future to be your earthly protector," he asked, holding out his hands.

She put her hands in his and said, "Our love may now be holier because of this deep purifying."

They knelt together and thanked God for His watchful care, for there are times when the fulness of human hearts must find rest by being poured into the depths of Almighty love, and moments too sacred to faithful hearts to be recorded.

When Mr. and Mrs. Howard came into the

parlor, and while matters were being explained, Alene asked : " Who could have written that letter ? "

Edna kissed her and said : " I have known for some time, and that is why I sent for you both. Human hands may make what we think sad havoc of our plans, but God is above it all. Be content to know now, darling, all things work together for good."

Edna noticed Sanford turn pale, and she knew he suspected the truth, but he closed his lips very firmly. Under the circumstances he would forgive.

" Only for this happy turn in affairs we would have had to tell you and explain before you left, but now I'm so glad," said Edna.

She was glad not only for the reunion of two true hearts, but because she was asked no more questions.

Neither could find words to express their gratitude to their kind friends, and they spent a very happy afternoon together.

The next morning Sanford took the early train for Chester with the same gladness he had gone once before. Alene left in the afternoon to open up the old home.

Sanford and Alene met again at Edith and Lyman's wedding, when their engagement was made known.

Mr. and Mrs. Mason and Fred were delighted.

The Mortons were not so well acquainted with

Sanford, but then he was Alene's choice and Lyman's friend, and he must be nice.

"Just to think we are still to be neighbors," said Edith, warmly, as she kissed Alene good-bye previous to taking their departure for Chester.

"I think it is just very selfish of you, Mr. Terrell, to want to take Miss Barton from us so soon," said Annie Morton to Sanford, as he held out his hand to say good-bye.

"Is your young man not the least selfish?" he asked.

"All men are," she answered, and threw what remained of her pocket full of rice after him.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOME.

IN the first of February there was a quiet wedding in the Barton home. Its spacious parlors were tastefully decorated with choice flowers.

Alene looked very pretty in silk, soft laces and orange blossoms as she stood by the side of her noble-looking husband. She did not feel so lonely leaving the home where she had witnessed so many changing scenes, for now it had been purchased by Fred Mason, and she knew she would always be a welcome guest with Fred and Annie.

Mr. and Mrs. Terrell left Tilson followed by the good wishes of all.

The minister asked his little daughter if she was glad Miss Barton was going away.

"No ; I'se jus' glad 'cause Miss Barton's glad," probably voiced most hearts.

The sun had set when they reached Chester. Sanford's sleigh had been brought to meet them at the station. He had left instructions with the house-keeper to have everything in readiness, and as they drove up to the mansion it looked more stately than ever, and was brilliantly lighted, as if shining out a

glad welcome for its new mistress. As they entered the hall Sanford said :

"Henceforth, with God's blessing, this shall be home," putting tender stress on the last word.

After supper, as they sat by the fire in the library, Sanford said :

"I am glad tonight that, notwithstanding our unaccountable separation, I never lowered my standard of life, or lost my ideal of womanhood, for I realize with the poet :

"She cannot look down to her lover—her love like her soul aspires,
He must stand by her side or above her who would kindle its holiest fires."

"I am glad we have grown stronger in those years, not only for our own sake, but for the sake of those whom we have met. Anything sent by the direct will of God should make us better, and we must be weaker than the enemy if we cannot conquer and outlive the cruel intention to injure.. It is only when the wrong is intentionally committed by ourselves that we are driven from the citadel of our ideal of christian perfection."

"Might not our souls have grown stronger united than parted?" he asked.

"That remains to be proved. Perhaps that trial

was the most effectual way of testing our strength of character," she answered.

"Still, I would rather the separation had been otherwise."

"Have you not prospered to your satisfaction even without me?" she asked, with a mischievous smile.

"Have you, too, not learned how powerless are these things, even fame, to take the place of love?" he asked.

She answered "Yes."

Then Sanford asked for some music, and they went to the piano.

"What shall we sing?" asked Alene.

"The first hymn we ever sang together," and when they had sung

"E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,"
and ended

"Nearer to Thee,"

Alene said: "I think we are nearer to God tonight e'en by the cross."

Sanford stooped and tenderly kissed her, saying: "Surely the Lord has watched between thee and me while we were absent one from another."

THE END.